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Trump plan to curb teen vaping exempts some flavors

By MATTHEW PERRONE
AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials will ban most flavored e-cigarettes popular with underage teenagers, but with major exceptions that benefit vaping manufacturers, retailers and adults who use the nicotine-emitting devices. The Trump administration announced Thursday that it will prohibit fruit, candy, mint and dessert flavors from small, cartridge-based e-cigarettes that are popular with high school students. But menthol and tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes will be allowed to remain on the market.

The flavor ban will also entirely exempt large, tank-based vaping devices, which are primarily sold in vape shops that cater to adult smokers.



In this April 11, 2018, file photo, a high school student uses a vaping device near a school campus in Cambridge, Mass.

Associated Press

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Trump plan to curb teen vaping exempts some flavors

Continued from Front

Together, the two exemptions represent a significant retreat from President Donald Trump's original plan announced four months ago, which would have banned all vaping flavors — including menthol — from all types of e-cigarettes. The new policy will preserve a significant portion of the multibillion-dollar vaping market. And the changes are likely to please both the largest e-cigarette manufacturer, Juul Labs, and thousands of vape shop owners who sell the tank-based systems, which allow users to mix customized flavors.

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that typically heat a flavored nicotine solution into an inhalable aerosol. They have been pitched to adults as a less-harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes, but there is limited data on their ability to help smokers quit.

The Food and Drug Administration has struggled for years to find the appropri-

ate approach to regulating vaping. Under current law, all e-cigarettes are supposed to undergo an FDA review beginning in May. Only those that can demonstrate a benefit for U.S. public health will be permitted to stay on the market.

"We have to protect our families," Trump told reporters on Tuesday, ahead of the announcement. "At the same time, it's a big industry. We want to protect the industry."

The flavor ban applies to e-cigarettes that use pre-filled nicotine cartridges mainly sold at gas stations and convenience stores. Juul is the biggest player in that market, but it previously pulled all of its flavors except menthol and tobacco after coming under intense political scrutiny. Many smaller manufacturers continue to sell sweet, fruity flavors like "grape slushie," "strawberry cotton candy" and "sea salt blueberry."

The flavor restrictions won't affect the larger specialty devices sold at vape shops,



This Sept. 16, 2019 file photo shows flavored vaping solutions in a window display at a vape and smoke shop in New York.

which typically don't admit customers under 21.

These tank-based systems allow users to fill the device with the flavor of their choice. Sales of these devices represent an estimated 40% of the U.S. vaping business, with sales across some 15,000 to 19,000 shops.

Still, the new policy represents the federal government's biggest step yet to combat a surge in teen vaping that officials fear is hooking a generation of young people on nicotine. In the latest government survey, more than 1 in 4 high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the previous month, despite federal law banning sales to those under 18. Late last month Trump signed a law raising the minimum age to purchase all tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 nationwide.

"We will not stand idly by as this crisis among America's youth grows and evolves, and we will continue monitoring the situation and take further actions as necessary," Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said in a statement. Companies that don't stop making and distributing the restricted products within 30 days risk penalties by the FDA, including fines and seizures.

Incoming FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn said the government's approach attempts to balance the problem of underage vaping with "the potential role that e-cigarettes may play in helping adult smokers transition completely away" from regular cigarettes.

But the decision to permit menthol and exempt tank-based vapes was immediately condemned by anti-tobacco advocates who have lobbied the Trump administration to follow through on its initial pledge to ban all flavors except tobacco.

"Only the elimination of all flavored e-cigarettes can end the worsening youth e-cigarette epidemic and stop e-cigarette companies from luring and addicting kids with flavored products," said Matthew Myers, of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, in a statement.

Myers' group and others have long opposed all flavors in tobacco products, including menthol in traditional cigarettes. They argue that teenagers who vape will simply shift to using menthol if it remains on the market.

When Trump officials first sketched out their plans at a White House event in September they specifi-

cally said menthol would be banned. But that effort stalled after vaping proponents and lobbyists pushed back and White House advisers told Trump that a total flavor ban could cost him votes.

Industry groups including the Vapor Technology Association launched an aggressive social media campaign — #IVapeIVote — contending that the plan would force the closure of vaping shops, eliminating jobs and sending users of electronic cigarettes back to traditional smokes. Trump's initial announcement came amid an outbreak of unexplained lung illnesses tied to vaping. But since then health officials have tied the vast majority of the cases to a contaminating filler added to illicit THC vaping liquids. THC is the chemical in marijuana that makes users feel high. Makers of legal nicotine-based vaping products have tried to distance themselves from the problem.

Trump suggested ahead of the announcement that the flavor restrictions might be temporary.

"Hopefully, if everything's safe, they're going to be going very quickly back onto the market," he told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. □

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Hanukkah stabbing suspect questioned in prior Monsey attack

By JIM MUSTIAN and RYAN TARINELLI

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The man charged in the machete attack on a Hanukkah celebration north of New York City had been questioned by local authorities in connection with an earlier stabbing of an Orthodox Jewish man in the same town, police said Thursday. Grafton Thomas faces state and federal charges in Saturday's Hanukkah attack, which wounded five people at a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York.

That attack came as police in the same town were investigating a Nov. 20 stabbing in which a man was critically injured while walking to a synagogue.

Ramapo Police Chief Brad Weidel said police questioned Thomas based on video evidence that suggested a Honda Pilot may have been involved in the November stabbing. Thomas' mother drives a Honda Pilot, and authorities said they seized and searched that vehicle following Thomas' arrest in Saturday's attack.

Weidel said investigators have not tied Thomas to the earlier stabbing.

"We have to operate with evidence," Weidel told reporters at a news conference. "We had no evidence, and we had no probable cause to do anything other than follow a



Surrounded primarily by family, David Neumann, center, wipes his eyes as he speaks to reporters in New City, N.Y., Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020, about his father, Josef Neumann who was critically injured in an attack on a Hanukkah celebration.

Associated Press

lead." Ramapo's remarks came as local prosecutors were preparing to present evidence on Friday to a grand jury that will be asked to indict Thomas in connection with the Hanukkah attack.

Thomas' defense attorney, Michael Sussman, said he asked the district attorney to delay that proceeding and allow Thomas to undergo an inpatient psychiatric evaluation.

Sussman said he learned more about Thomas' history of mental health problems after visiting Thomas' former residence in Sullivan County and finding "rambling

writings" and unopened bottles of psychotropic medication.

He said none of the writings contained signs of anti-Semitism, though he added he has not seen the materials federal authorities seized from Thomas' home in Greenwood Lake.

Authorities have said Thomas, 37, had handwritten journals containing anti-Semitic references and had recently used his phone to look up information on Hitler and the location of synagogues,

Sussman described Thomas as a man with "tremendous mental derangement who

never received the care and treatment he needed." He provided new details about a September 2018 incident in which Thomas was arrested at his mother's home after refusing to put down a knife that a police officer ordered him to drop. Thomas did not undergo a psychological evaluation following that arrest, Sussman said, though mental health treatment was made a condition of the case's dismissal.

Sussman said Thomas had been "mischaracterized" as an anti-Semite by elected leaders who do not yet know all the facts.

"There's something here that's seriously wrong," he said, referring to Thomas' lack of sufficient treatment. "How it manifested is a great tragedy."

Sussman spoke hours after the daughter of a man gravely wounded in the machete attack made an emotional plea to end hatred and anti-Semitism.

"We want our kids to go to school and feel safe," Nicky Kohen, the daughter of Josef Neumann, told reporters in front of her home in Rockland County. "We want to go to synagogues and feel safe. We want to go to grocery stores and malls and feel safe."

Neumann, 72, has been unconscious since Saturday's attack and remains in intensive care at Westchester Medical Center, where he was undergoing surgery Thursday. The family released a statement this week saying Neumann, a father of seven, may have permanent brain damage. They also released a photograph of Neumann showing his head injuries.

"The doctors do not have high hopes for him," Kohen said. "If he wakes up he may never be able to walk, talk or even process speech again."

"We hope he wakes to a changed world with peace, unity and love for all," she added. "Let's stand up together and stop the hatred." □

'Affluenza teen' jailed in Texas for probation violation

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)

— A Texas man who used "affluenza" as a defense at his trial for killing four people while driving drunk was arrested Thursday after authorities say he violated the terms of his probation. Ethan Couch, 22, was booked into a jail in Fort Worth after he tested positive for the psychoactive compound in marijuana, court records show.

Couch's attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Jail records did not indicate whether his bond had been set Thursday afternoon. Couch became known as the "affluenza teen" during his manslaughter trial for the 2013 crash. Couch, 16 at the time of the crash, was found to have a blood-alcohol level three times the legal limit for adult drivers after the crash. But a psychologist told a juvenile court that he was affected by "affluenza," or irresponsibility caused by family

wealth. A judge originally sentenced Couch to 10 years of probation. But he was later jailed after attending a party where alcohol was served and then fleeing to Mexico with his mother to avoid punishment.

In 2013, Couch lost control of his family's pickup truck after he and his friends had played beer pong and drank beer stolen from a Walmart. He veered into a crowd of people helping the driver of a disabled

vehicle on the side of the road. Authorities later estimated that he was going 70 mph in a 40 mph zone. The crash fatally injured the stranded motorist, a youth minister who stopped to help her and a mother and daughter who came out of their nearby home. Tonya Couch, Ethan's mother, is awaiting trial on charges of hindering apprehension of a felon and money laundering arising from when they fled to Mexico in 2015. □



In this Feb. 5, 2016, file booking photo, provided by the Tarrant County, Texas, Sheriff's Office shows Ethan Couch, a Texas man who used "affluenza" as a defense at his trial for killing four people while driving drunk.

Associated Press

Democrat Julián Castro drops out of 2020 presidential race

By **PAUL J. WEBER**

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Former Obama housing secretary Julián Castro, the only Latino in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary race, ended his campaign Thursday after a yearlong run in which he pushed his rivals on immigration and took big swings in debates but struggled to break through with voters. "I'm so proud of the campaign we've run together. We've shaped the conversation on so many important issues in this race, stood up for the most vulnerable people and given a voice to those who are often forgotten," Castro said in a video announcing his exit. "But with only a month until the Iowa caucuses, and given the circumstances of this campaign season, I have determined that it simply isn't our time."

Castro, who launched his campaign last January, dropped out after failing to garner enough support in the polls or donations to qualify for recent Democratic debates. A former

San Antonio mayor who later became President Barack Obama's secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Castro had stalled for most of his campaign, hovering around 1% in polls, and never came close to raising money like his better-known challengers.

He had not yet released his end-of-year fundraising numbers, but by October had raised less than \$8 million total. As Castro exited the field, Bernie Sanders announced on Thursday that he brought in more than \$34.5 million in the previous three months alone.

Castro's departure reflects the increasing lack of color in a Democratic field that began as one of the most diverse in history. Between Sen. Kamala Harris of California dropping out and Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey also lagging, the sixth and final Democratic debate of 2019 had no black or Latino candidates onstage.

Last month, Castro said women and candidates of color were being pushed



In this Oct. 28, 2019 file photo, former Housing and Urban Development Secretary and Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro speaks at the J Street National Conference in Washington.

Associated Press

aside in the race because of what he called "the media's flawed formula for 'electability.'" He also ran an ad in majority-white Iowa, arguing that the state should no longer vote first in Democrats' nominating process because it doesn't reflect the diversity of the party.

"There is a strategic disadvantage when you don't have a very diverse population or electoral base in those states," said Jeronimo Cortina, a political science

professor and associate director of the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston. "You can see that minority candidates have a harder time to run in these primary election seasons."

Castro, 45, was among the youngest in the running at a moment when the party's ascendant left wing is demanding generational change. And as the grandson of a Mexican immigrant, Castro said he recognized the meaning of his candidacy in the face of President Donald Trump's inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric and hard-line policies on the U.S.-Mexico border.

But he labored not to be pigeonholed as a single-issue candidate. He made Puerto Rico his first campaign stop, recited the names of black victims killed in high-profile police shootings and was the first in the field to call for Trump's impeachment. He also was a leading voice in the field on poverty and ending hunger.

But his sagging poll numbers never budged. Early on, he was often eclipsed by another Texan in the race who dropped out this fall, former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, and another young former mayor, Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana. His campaign and supporters, meanwhile, grumbled that he didn't get due credit for taking out-front positions. Castro's former challengers said his voice would be missed.

"Secretary Castro brought a firm, clear, moral voice to this primary," Elizabeth Warren said during a campaign stop in New Hampshire. "I'm very sorry that he's not part of this, but I know he has an important voice in American politics and that we're going to hear a lot more from him both in 2020 and in years to come."

Trying to show he could go toe-to-toe with Trump, Castro swung for big moments on debate stages, and he flirted with a much-needed breakout in June after confronting O'Rourke over not supporting decriminalization of illegal border crossings.

But turning his sights on Joe Biden on a later stage brought swift backlash. During the September debate in Houston, Castro appeared to touch on concerns about Biden's advancing age and added a parting shot at the then-76-year-old former vice president.

"I'm fulfilling the legacy of Barack Obama, and you're not," Castro said.

Castro denied taking a personal dig at Biden as others in the field condemned the exchange. Three days later, Castro lost one of his three backers in Congress, Rep. Vicente González of Texas, who switched his endorsement to Biden.

In October, Castro had warned supporters in a fundraising appeal that failing to make the November debate stage would spell the end of his campaign. He needed to hit at least 3% polling in four early state or national polls but didn't get even one.

What is next for Castro is unclear. Back home in Texas, Democrats had long viewed Castro as their biggest star in waiting, and some have urged him to run for governor as the state trends more diverse and liberal.

Castro was pegged as a rising Democratic star after being elected as mayor of the nation's seventh-largest city at age 34, and he was on the short list for Hillary Clinton's running mate in 2016. □

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U.S. starts sending asylum seekers across Arizona border

By **ASTRID GALVAN** and **CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN** *undefined*

PHOENIX (AP) — The U.S. government on Thursday began sending asylum-seekers back to Nogales, Mexico, to await court hearings that will be scheduled roughly 350 miles (563 kilometers) away in Juarez, Mexico.

Authorities are expanding a program known as Remain in Mexico that requires tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait out their immigration court hearings in Mexico. Until this week, the government was driving some asylum seekers from Nogales, Arizona, to El Paso, Texas, so they could be returned to Juarez.

Now, asylum-seekers will have to find their own way through dangerous Mexican border roads.

About 30 asylum seekers were sent to Nogales, Mexico, on Thursday, said Gilda Loureiro, director of the San Juan Bosco migrant shelter in Nogales, Sonora.

Loureiro said the migrants hadn't made it to the shelter yet but that it was prepared and has a capacity of about 400.

"We're going to take up to the capacity we have," she said.

Critics say the Remain in Mexico program, one of several Trump administration policies that have all but ended asylum in the U.S., puts migrants who fled their home countries back into dangerous Mexican border towns where they are often kidnapped, robbed or extorted.

A Human Rights First report released in December documented at least 636 public reports of violence against asylum-seekers returned to Mexico including rape, kidnapping and torture. Human Rights First said that was a steep increase over October, when the group had identified 343 attacks, and noted the latest figure is surely an under-count because most crime victims don't report.

The government calls the program Migrant Protection Protocols.

Nogales is now the seventh border crossing through which U.S. authorities returns migrants to Mexico to await court hearings. The policy was introduced in January 2018 in San Diego.

More than 56,000 people were sent back to Mexico by the end of November, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. Of the more than 24,000 cases that have been decided, only 117, or less than 1%, have been granted asylum or some other form relief allowing them to stay in the United States. But U.S. authorities have lauded the program, saying it's helped to significantly reduce illegal border crossings. The Border Patrol apprehended just over 33,000 people along the Southwest border in November, compared to 144,000 in May, when border crossings peaked.

In a statement, acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said the program has been "an extremely effective tool."

"I am confident in the program's continued success in adjudicating meritorious cases quickly and preventing fraudulent claims," Wolf wrote.

A three-judge appeals court panel heard arguments Oct. 1 in San Francisco on a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union to block the policy. The court has yet to rule. □



In this Sept. 17, 2019, file photo, migrants who are applying for asylum in the United States go through a processing area at a new tent courtroom at the Migration Protection Protocols Immigration Hearing Facility, in Laredo, Texas.

Associated Press



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5 crew members feared dead after Alaska fishing boat sinks

By **BECKY BOHRER** and **MARTHA BELLISLE**
Associated Press
JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) —

Five crew members missing after a crab fishing vessel sank in the frigid waters off Alaska were feared dead after authorities called off a search for those working in the one of the most dangerous industries in the U.S. Two other crew members were rescued after the disaster Tuesday, telling authorities they were the only ones who made it into a life raft, the Anchorage Daily News reported. They were hypothermic but have been released from a hospital.

The Coast Guard said it used helicopters, planes and a boat to look for the missing crew members for 20 hours before ending the search late Wednesday because they were not likely to have survived.

The agency didn't release any details Thursday on what caused the boat to sink, saying that talking to the survivors is part of the investigation.

The boat, named the Scan-

dies Rose, was carrying a load of crabbing pots for the start of the winter sea-

perilous conditions in Alaska waters that have been immortalized in the Discov-

Coast Guard launched a rescue. The vessel's last known po-

members did, the newspaper reported.

The suits offer flotation and hypothermia protection. David Otness, a retired crab fisherman in Cordova, Alaska, who spent more than 50 years in the Pacific and Bering Sea industry, said it's dangerous work.

"It's known for its loss," he said. "We can count the years when that isn't the case. It's quite a life, but it's a labor of love and fear and respect for the world around you."

Otness said people are drawn to the job for many reasons.

"It appeals to somebody with a sense of adventure," he said. "The money can be really good, and it can end in tragedy like this."

The sheer size of the crab pots, which weigh about 700 pounds each, can pose problems in stormy weather, Otness said.

They can get covered with ice, which causes the boat to be top-heavy, he said, describing the Scandies Rose as a well-built boat that could hold up to 250 crab pots.

"It's a dance, a ballet that transpires," Otness said. "Your center of gravity is so quickly disrupted."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health calls commercial fishing one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S. It said there were 179 deaths in Alaska fisheries between 2000 and 2014.

From 2010 to 2014, there were 66 vessel disasters in Alaska waters, including sinkings and fires, that killed 15 people, the agency said. Leading causes of fatal disasters were instability and being hit by large waves, it said.

Gary Knagin's wife, Gerry Cobban Knagin, wrote on Facebook that her brother Gary Cobban, the captain and his son, David, were on board.

Knagin of Kodiak, Alaska, told Anchorage news station KTVA-TV that her relatives were not among those who had been rescued. She said she hoped he was "on one of the little Islands waiting for us!" □



This undated photo shows the Scandies Rose vessel in Seattle.

Associated Press

son, Dan Mattsen, a partner in the boat that is managed by Seattle-Based Mattsen Management, told the Seattle Times. Crabbing boats endure

ery Channel documentary series "Deadliest Catch." Workers face dangers like huge waves, harsh weather and massive crab pots that could crush them.

Gary Knagin of Kodiak, Alaska, the brother-in-law of the boat's captain, Gary Cobban, told The Associated Press on Thursday that he doesn't think the five crew members will be found alive.

"We know the risks involved in this profession, and I'm not holding out hope," said Knagin, who worked on a crab boat for 30 years in Alaska's Bering Sea. "I've seen this too many times. There's a 13-hour window in those conditions, and they passed that." Ashley Boggs of Peru, Indiana, said she was due to marry crew member Brock Rainey after he returned from Alaska and hasn't given up hope. "I'm just praying and hoping they find him on land or something," she told AP on Thursday.

Boggs said she received a call from Rainey on New Year's Eve saying the conditions were bad.

The 130-foot (40-meter) boat, which had left from Dutch Harbor, sent a may-day distress call, and the

sition was 170 miles (270 kilometers) southwest of Kodiak Island, near the southern tip of Alaska, and it sank about 10 p.m. Tuesday, the agency said.

Rescue crews arrived about 2 a.m. Wednesday and battled winds of more than 40 mph (64 kph), 15- to 20-foot (4.5- to 6-meter) seas and visibility that was limited to 1 mile (1.5 kilometers), Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Melissa McKenzie said.

"That's rough conditions," she said Thursday.

McKenzie said the air temperature was about 10 degrees (12 below zero Celsius). The estimated water temperature in the area was 43 degrees (6 degrees Celsius), National Weather Service meteorologist Shaun Baines said.

Rescuers saw a faint light in one life raft, but a medic lowered from a helicopter found it empty, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Another faint light was spotted about a half-mile (1 kilometer) away, where searchers found the two survivors, ages 38 and 34.

The men told rescuers that they were able to get into survival suits and didn't know if the other five crew

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Texas judge: Hospital can remove baby from life support

By JAMIE STENGLE
Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A Texas judge on Thursday sided with a hospital that plans to remove an 11-month-old girl from life support after her mother disagreed with the decision by doctors who say the infant is in pain and that her condition will never improve.

Trinity Lewis had asked Judge Sandee Bryan Marion to issue an injunction in Tarrant County district court to ensure that Cook Children's Medical Center doesn't end her daughter Tinslee Lewis' life-sustaining treatment. Texas Right to Life, an anti-abortion group that is advocating for Tinslee, said the girl's mother will appeal the judge's decision.

Doctors at the Fort Worth hospital had planned to remove Tinslee from life support Nov. 10 after invoking Texas' "10-day rule," which can be employed when a family disagrees with doctors who say life-sustaining treatment should be stopped. The law stipulates that if the hospital's ethics committee agrees with doctors, treatment can be withdrawn after 10 days if a new provider can't be found to take the patient. In a statement issued by Texas Right to Life, which opposes the "10-day rule," Lewis said she was "heartbroken" over the judge's decision. "I feel frustrated because anyone in that courtroom would want more time just like I do if Tinslee were their baby," she said.

The hospital said in a statement Thursday that in order to keep Tinslee alive, she's on a constant stream of painkillers, sedatives and paralytics. She currently has severe sepsis, which isn't uncommon when patients require deep sedation and chemical paralysis, it said. "Even with the most extraordinary measures the medical team is taking, Tinslee continues to suffer," the hospital said.

Efforts to find another facility to take her have been



This Nov. 8, 2019 photo provided by Texas Right to Life shows Tinslee Lewis.

unsuccessful. The hospital said it has reached out to more than 20 facilities. Texas Right to Life and Protect TX Fragile Kids have also been trying to find a facility to take her.

Prior to Thursday's ruling, both sides agreed that if Marion denied the injunction request, the hospital would wait at least seven days before taking Tinslee off life-support. In her decision, Marion said the seven-day period would give the girl's mother time to file a notice of appeal and a motion for emergency relief with a state court of appeals.

Tinslee has been at Cook Children's since her premature birth. The hospital said she has a rare heart defect and suffers from chronic lung disease and severe chronic high blood pressure. She hasn't come off a ventilator since going into respiratory arrest in early July and requires full respiratory and cardiac support. Lewis testified at a hearing last month that despite her daughter's sedation, she has a sense of the girl's likes and dislikes, describing her as "sassy." She said Tinslee likes getting her nails done but doesn't like having her hair brushed.

"I want to be the one to make the decision for her," Lewis said about removing

her daughter from life support. At the hearing last month, Dr. Jay Duncan, one of Tinslee's physicians, described the girl's complex conditions and Cook Children's efforts to treat her, which have included about seven surgeries. The cardiac intensive care doctor said that for the first five months of Tinslee's life doctors had hope she might one day at least be able to go home.

But Duncan said there came a point when doctors determined they had run out of surgical and clinical options, and that treatment was no longer benefiting Tinslee. Duncan said last month that the girl would likely die within half a year, and noted the hospital has made "extraordinary" efforts to find another facility for her.

"She is in pain. Changing a diaper causes pain. Suctioning her breathing tube causes pain. Being on the ventilator causes pain," he said.

Duncan said there had been "many, many" conversations with Tinslee's family about her dire condition.

Tarrant County Juvenile Court Judge Alex Kim issued a temporary restraining order to stop the removal of life support on Nov. 10. But Kim was removed from

the case after the hospital filed a motion questioning his impartiality and saying he had bypassed case-assignment rules to designate himself as the presiding judge. After his removal, Judge Marion, who is chief justice of Texas' Fourth Court of Appeals, was assigned to hear the request for an injunction in Tarrant County district court.

The case has become a rallying point for Republicans in Texas, with the attorney general stating his opposition to the "10-day rule" and GOP state Rep. Tan Parker saying it "doesn't fit with Texas values."

The 1999 law that shields from lawsuits doctors who follow the process of going through an ethics committee was crafted by a task force that included lawmakers, attorneys, doctors and anti-abortion groups. Supporters of the law passed when George W. Bush, a Republican, was governor include the Texas Alliance for Life, the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Texas Medical Association.

Supporters say the law provides a framework for doctors and hospitals to resolve differences and ensures that doctors can't be forced to perform medical interventions that cause harm or suffering. □

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Australian prime minister is jeered in wildfire-ravaged zone

By **TRISTAN LAVALETTE**

Associated Press

PERTH, Australia (AP) —

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was confronted by angry residents who cursed and insulted him Thursday as he visited a wildfire-ravaged corner of the country.

Locals in Cobargo, in New South Wales, yelled at him, made obscene gestures and called him an "idiot" and worse, criticizing him for the lack of equipment to deal with the fires in town. They jeered as his car left. In the New South Wales town of Quaama, a firefighter refused to shake hands with him.

"Every single time this area has a flood or a fire, we get nothing. If we were Sydney, if we were north coast, we would be flooded with donations with urgent emergency relief," a resident said in Cobargo.

The outpouring of anger came as authorities said 381 homes had been destroyed on the New South Wales southern coast this week. At least eight people have died this week in New South Wales and the neighboring state of Victoria.

More than 200 fires are burning in Australia's two most-populous states. Blaz-



In this Monday, Dec. 30, 2019, aerial photo, wildfires rage under plumes of smoke in Bairnsdale, Australia.

es have also been burning in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

"I'm not surprised people are feeling very raw at the moment. And that's why I came today, to be here, to see it for myself, to offer what comfort I could," Morrison said, adding, "There is still, you know, some very dangerous days ahead. And we understand that, and that's why we're going

to do everything we can to ensure they have every support they will need."

Morrison, who has also been criticized over his climate change policies and accused of putting the economy ahead of the environment, insisted that Australia is "meeting the challenge better than most countries" and "exceeding the targets we set out."

Cooler weather since Tues-

day has aided firefighting and allowed people to replenish supplies, with long lines of cars forming at gas stations and supermarkets. But high temperatures and strong winds are forecast to return on Saturday, and thousands of tourists fled the country's eastern coast Thursday ahead of worsening conditions.

New South Wales authorities ordered tourists to leave

a 250-kilometer (155-mile) zone. State Transport Minister Andrew Constance called it the "largest mass relocation of people out of the region that we've ever seen."

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian declared a seven-day state of emergency starting Friday, which grants fire officials more authority. It's the third state of emergency for New South Wales in the past two months.

"We don't take these decisions lightly, but we also want to make sure we're taking every single precaution to be prepared for what could be a horrible day on Saturday," Berejiklian said.

The early and devastating start to Australia's summer wildfires has led authorities to rate this season the worst on record. About 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land have burned, at least 17 people have been killed, and more than 1,400 homes have been destroyed.

The crisis "will continue to go on until we can get some decent rain that can deal with some of the fires that have been burning for many, many months," the prime minister said. □

Associated Press

3 women investigated for causing deadly blaze at German zoo

By **GEIR MOULSON**

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Three women are under investigation in Germany for launching paper sky lanterns for the new year which apparently ignited a devastating fire that killed more than 30 animals at a zoo, officials said Thursday.

The three local women — a mother and her two daughters, ages 30 to 60 — went to police in the western city of Krefeld on New Year's Day after authorities held a news conference about the blaze, criminal police chief Gerd Hoppmann said.

The women are being investigated on suspicion of negligent arson, prosecutor Jens Frobel said. The offense can carry a prison sentence of up to five



A woman lights a candle at the main entrance of the Zoo in Krefeld, Germany, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

years.

Many Germans welcome in the new year legally with fireworks at midnight. Sky lanterns, however, are both illegal and unusual in Germany. The mini hot-air balloons made of paper have been used in Asia for centuries.

The fire started in a corner of the ape house's roof in the first minutes of the new year and spread rapidly. The zoo near the Dutch border says the ape house burned down and more than 30 animals — including five orangutans, two gorillas, a chimpanzee and

several monkeys — were killed, as well as fruit bats and birds. The animals either burned to death or died from smoke inhalation, authorities said.


Hoppmann said the women had ordered five sky lanterns on the internet and told authorities that they had believed they were legal in Germany. He added that there was nothing in the product description showing that they were banned.

Hoppmann described the women as "completely normal people who seemed very sensible, very responsible" and said it was "very courageous" of them to come forward, saving authorities a tricky investigation. He added that they feared reprisals and authorities limited the details

given about the suspects. Investigators believe that just one lantern started the blaze. They found the other four later, with handwritten good wishes for the new year attached.

The destroyed ape house lacked fire detectors and sprinklers, which weren't required when it was built in the 1970s. The zoo said, however, that it had passed a regular fire protection check a few months ago.

The building's roof had been renovated after a hailstorm a few years ago and plexiglass was added, Hoppmann said. He said while investigators were confident the sky lantern was to blame, they will look at other factors that may have contributed to the blaze, such as dry fallen leaves on the roof. □



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Greece, Israel, Cyprus sign deal for EastMed gas pipeline

By **NICHOLAS PAPHITIS**
MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) —

Greece, Israel and Cyprus signed a deal Thursday to build an undersea pipeline to carry gas from new offshore deposits in the southeastern Mediterranean to continental Europe.

The 1,900-kilometer (1,300-mile) EastMed pipeline is intended to provide an alternative gas source for energy-hungry Europe, which is largely dependent on supplies from Russia and the Caucasus region.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who attended the signing ceremony with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, said the pipeline will offer Europe "better flexibility and independence in its energy sources."

The pipeline would run from Israel's Levantine Basin offshore gas reserves to Cyprus, the Greek island of Crete and the Greek mainland. An overland pipeline to northwestern Greece and another planned undersea pipeline would carry the gas to Italy.

The project could also accommodate future gas



Cypriot Energy Minister Georgios Lakkotrypīs, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiadis, Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Greek Energy Minister Kōstīs Hatzidakīs, and Israel's Minister of Energy & Water Yuval Steinitz applaud following ceremony, in Athens, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

finds in waters off Cyprus and Greece, where exploration is under way.

The project, with a rough budget of \$6 billion, is expected to satisfy about 10% of the European Union's natural gas needs. But it is fraught with political and logistical complexities.

The race to claim offshore energy deposits in the southern Mediterranean has created new tensions

between Greece and Cyprus, on one side, and historic rival Turkey.

Ankara has raised the stakes with recent moves to explore waters controlled by the two EU member countries. Cyprus and Greece are particularly disturbed because Turkey sent warship-escorted drill ships into waters where Cyprus has exclusive economic rights.

Cyprus' Anastasiades said the pipeline affirms that Greece and Cyprus have sovereign rights in waters assigned to them under international law.

"This cooperation that we have developed ... isn't directed against any third country," he said.

"On the contrary, whichever country wishes is welcome to join, on the understanding of course that it

adopts the basic principles of international law and fully respects the sovereign rights and the territorial integrity of independent states."

Alluding to Turkey's stance, Anastasiades said cooperation is the only approach in an unstable region instead of embarking on a course of "self-isolation."

Netanyahu said Israel is set to become a "powerhouse in terms of energy" with its offshore gas reserves. He added that the three countries have established "an alliance of great importance" that will bolster regional stability.

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz has said the EastMed pipeline would take up to seven years to build and that its advantages include being less vulnerable to sabotage and not crossing many national borders to reach markets.

Cyprus is divided into a Greek Cypriot south, where the island nation's internationally recognized government is located, and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot north backed by Turkey. The split followed a 1974 Turkish invasion after an aborted coup aiming to bring Cyprus under Greek rule. □

Spain's Socialists assemble support to form a government

Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The possibility of a new government in Spain moved closer Thursday when a small party said it will abstain in upcoming confidence votes in parliament.

The decision by the Catalan ERC party removes a major hurdle for interim Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's efforts to form a Socialist-led coalition government after months of delays in the eurozone's fourth-largest economy.

The Socialists got the most votes in two consecutive general elections



Spain's caretaker Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez leaves after signing an agreement with the Podemos party in the Spanish parliament in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Dec. 30, 2019.

Associated Press

last year. Both times they failed to capture a parliamentary majority, meaning they couldn't win a confidence vote that is required before taking office.

The country has been run by Sánchez's caretaker government for almost a year. The Catalan ERC party's national committee said in a statement it had decided to abstain in confidence votes expected over the weekend and Tuesday, meaning Sánchez may finally clinch victory.

After weeks of negotiations, Sán-

chez has secured the political support of the anti-austerity United We Can party, which is due to join the coalition government as the junior partner, and of several tiny parties. Securing the abstention of the ERC party, which controls 13 of the 350 seats in the Spanish Congress of Deputies, may be enough for Sánchez to obtain the votes he needs. He is not expected to clinch an absolute majority of 176 votes in the first round of voting due Sunday. Sánchez's success is not guaranteed. □

Kenyan officials say extremist attack on bus convoy kills 4

By **TOM ODULA**
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Kenyan officials say four people were killed on Thursday when a convoy of passenger buses was fired on by Islamic extremists in the country's eastern coastal area.

Somalia's al-Shabab rebels have claimed responsibility for the attack.

The gunmen fired at a convoy of three buses and two vans that was being escorted by police to Lamu, said Lamu County Commissioner Irungu Macharia.

The four were killed when the vehicles were sprayed with gunfire by attackers in the Nyongoro area of Lamu county along Kenya's Indian Ocean coast, he said.

The first bus was hit with bullets on its side and tires but the driver managed to speed away, he said. Other vehicles in the convoy stopped and the gunmen opened fire at passengers fleeing on foot into the bushes, he said.

The police escort had been delayed and was behind the convoy but arrived in time to prevent a massacre, he said. Police escorts



A man looks at a bus which was ambushed by gunmen in the Nyongoro area of Lamu county, near the Indian Ocean coast of Kenya Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

for passenger vehicles in the area became mandatory after 2014 when al-Shabab killed nearly 90 people in two attacks in Lamu county.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack on its Andalus radio station, saying its fighters spared Muslim passengers and only killed Christians.

When the extremists opened fire three passen-

gers were shot at close range and died instantly, said a police report on Thursday's attack seen by the Associated Press. The fourth fatality was a conductor of one of the buses, it said. It said two other passengers were wounded.

Mombasa county Governor Ali Hassan Joho condemned the attack. "This is unacceptable in this day and age. We have no

choice but to be accommodating and tolerant to one another," he said in a tweet.

In recent weeks, ahead of the New Year, Somalia's al-Shabab rebels have stepped up attacks in Kenya whose troops are in Somalia fighting the extremists. The militants have vowed retribution on Kenya for sending its troops to Somalia.

"Its unfortunate but to be expected," said security analyst Andrew Franklin, a former U.S. Marine who is a longtime resident of Kenya. "There is low-intensity conflict going on and they (government officials) are not treating the situation in the five front-line counties with the seriousness it deserves," he said, referring to Tana River, Lamu, Wajir, Mandera and Garissa counties, which neighbor Somalia and have been listed by the government as hot-spots for extremist activity.

"Al-Shabab has the tactical initiative. It decides when and where to launch an attack and all we do is react," he said.

Al-Shabab stepped attacks in Kenya in December. The group killed 11 people in Mandera county, eight of them police officers returning to duty, who were pulled from a bus on December 6. The group killed two non-Muslim construction workers in Garissa county on December 17 and on Dec. 22 burned construction equipment owned by a Muslim contractor that was being used to develop a road in Mandera. □

Turkish lawmakers authorize sending troops to fight in Libya

By **SUZAN FRASER**
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey's parliament on Thursday authorized the deployment of troops to Libya to support the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli battle forces loyal to a rival government that is seeking to capture the capital.

Turkish lawmakers voted 325-184 at an emergency session in favor of a one-year mandate allowing the government to dispatch troops amid concerns that Turkish forces could aggravate the conflict in Libya and destabilize the region.

The Tripoli-based government of Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj has faced an offensive by the rival regime in the east and commander Gen. Khalifa Hifter. The fighting has threatened to plunge Libya into vio-



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrives to deliver a speech at an event in Ankara, Turkey, Monday, Dec. 30, 2019.

Associated Press

lent chaos rivaling the 2011 conflict that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last month that Sarraj requested the Turkish deployment,

after he and Sarraj signed a military deal that allows Ankara to dispatch military experts and personnel to Libya. That deal, along with a separate agreement on maritime boundaries between Turkey and Libya,

has drawn ire across the region and beyond.

Ankara says the deployment is vital for Turkey to safeguard its interests in Libya and in the eastern Mediterranean, where it finds itself increasingly isolated as Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel have established exclusive economic zones paving the way for oil and gas exploration.

"A Libya whose legal government is under threat can spread instability to Turkey," ruling party legislator Ismet Yilmaz argued in defense of the motion. "Those who shy away from taking steps on grounds that there is a risk will throw our children into a greater danger."

The government has not revealed details about the possible Turkish deployment. The motion allows the government to decide

on the scope, amount and timing of any mission by Turkish troops.

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay told state-run Anadolu Agency that Turkey would send "the necessary number (of troops) whenever there is a need."

But he also said Turkey would not dispatch its forces if Libya's rival government halts its offensive.

"If the other side adopts a different stance and says 'OK, we are withdrawing, we are backing down,' then why would we go?" Oktay said.

Turkey's main opposition party, CHP, had said its lawmakers would vote against the motion because the deployment would embroil Turkey in another conflict and make it a party to the further "shedding of Muslim blood." □

Floods in Indonesia capital recede as death toll reaches 30

NINIEK KARMINI

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)

— Residents of Indonesia's capital who had been forced into shelters by widespread flooding began returning to their homes Thursday as the waters started to recede, though the death toll from the disaster jumped to 30. Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged at least 182 neighborhoods in greater Jakarta starting Wednesday and caused landslides in the Bogor and Depok districts on the city's outskirts.

Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan said much of the water had receded by Thursday evening and the num-

ber of displaced people at temporary shelters had fallen to about 5,000 from 19,000. Officials had earlier said 35,000 people were in shelters across the greater metropolitan area.

Those returning to their homes found streets covered in mud and debris. Cars that had been parked in driveways were swept away, landing upside down in parks or piled up in narrow alleys. Sidewalks were strewn with sandals, pots and pans and old photographs.

Authorities took advantage of the receding waters to clear away mud and remove piles of wet garbage from the streets. Electricity was restored to



Youths use an inflatable raft to move through a flooded neighborhood in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

tens of thousands of residences and businesses.

At their peak, the floods had inundated thousands of homes and buildings, forced authorities to cut off electricity and water and paralyzed transport networks, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo said. Floodwaters reached as high as 2.5 meters (more than 8 feet) in places.

Wibowo said the number of people killed in the disaster had climbed to 30.

It was the worst flooding

since 2013, when 47 people were killed after Jakarta was inundated by monsoon rains.

Jakarta's Halim Perdanakusumah domestic airport reopened Thursday after operations were suspended when flood water submerged its runway, said Muhammad Awaluddin, the president director of PT. Angkasa Pura II, the airport's operator. Nearly 20,000 passengers had been affected by the closure.

In Jakarta's satellite cities

of Bekasi and Tangerang, where rivers had burst their banks, large areas remain inundated.

Residents of Bekasi waded through water up to their necks or floated on makeshift rafts carrying clothes and other salvaged possessions. Some scrambled onto roofs to await rescue from soldiers and emergency workers in rubber dinghies.

"The government is awful and the rescue effort is too slow," said Imas Narulita, who spent 36 hours on the second floor of her suburban house with her 6-month-old baby.

She said that she have a neighbor who is sick but no one has come to rescue him. "In this modern time, no one should have died because of this," she said.

Social affairs minister Juliari Peter Batubara said the government dispatched medical teams and rubber rafts to the worst-hit areas, while rescuers in boats delivered instant noodles and rice to those who chose to stay on the upper floors of their homes. □

Hong Kong legal groups condemn protester insults to judge



The lion statue in front of the international HSBC Bank branch is covered with red paint in Hong Kong, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP)

— Hong Kong's Law Society and Bar Association on Thursday condemned abusive graffiti sprayed by protesters on a court building that insulted a judge by name. The groups called that "an affront to the rule of law and judicial integrity" in the former British colony, which has retained its unique judicial system free from the corruption and political interference so common on mainland China.

The incident came Wednesday during a New Year's Day anti-government march that swiftly devolved into running battles between police and hardcore demonstrators.

"The graffiti are outrageous and firmly condemned," the joint letter stated. "Abusive comments implying that judicial decisions were made

or influenced by political considerations are wholly unjustified."

Along with many civic and business groups, the Law Society and Bar Association had been critical of proposed extradition legislation that set off the original protests in June. They have been less outspoken about the increasingly violent protests except when the city's independent judiciary has been attacked. Many protesters are driven concerns that China is gradually tightening its control over Hong Kong's institutions, from major businesses, to law enforcement and the media.

The attack on the court building was also condemned by police spokesman Kwok Ka-chuen at a briefing Thursday.

"In one of the most alarming cases, rioters spray-painted offensive words on the outer wall of the High Court to insult a judge," Kwok told reporters. "This kind of attack will make a dent in the spirit of the law and threaten the independence of the judiciary."

Kwok said police had arrested 420 people during the New Year holiday, bring the total arrested during the protests to around 7,000. □

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Mexico City plastic bag ban to take residents back in time

By **DIEGO DELGADO**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — For centuries, Mexico City residents brought warm tortillas home in reusable cloths or woven straw baskets, and toted others foods in conical rolls of paper, "ayate" mesh or net bags, or even string bundles.

People in Mexico's massive capital city may have to return to those old ways starting Wednesday, when a new law takes effect banning the plastic bags that became ubiquitous over the last 30 years.

Some say they are ready and willing, and grocery stores are promising to promote reusable synthetic fiber bags, but others are struggling to get their minds around how the ban will work in practice.

"We have a very rich history in ways to wrap things," said Claudia Hernández, the city's director of environmental awareness. "We are finding that people are returning to baskets, to cucuruchos," she said, referring to cone-shaped rolls of paper once used to wrap loose bulk goods like nuts, chips or seeds.

Some Mexico City residents still use traditional ayate bags, or tortilla towels or baskets, and many — especially the elderly — pull two-wheeled, folding shopping baskets through grocery stores. Some merchants still use old sardine cans to measure out bulk



A young man carries a new plastic bag, suddenly a rare sight on the streets of the capital as a ban on plastic bags took effect with the new year, in Mexico City, Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020.

Associated Press

goods. Under the new law, grocery stores will be fined if they give out plastic bags. Most will offer reusable shopping bags made of thick plastic fiber, usually selling them for around 75 cents.

"They are not giving them away, they are selling them, and that is what I don't agree with," said city subway worker Ernesto Gallardo Chávez, who wonders what will happen if he goes grocery shopping after Jan. 1 and forgets to bring his reusable bags.

"Just imagine, I forget my bag and I buy a lot of stuff," said Gallardo Chávez. "How do I carry it all, if they don't give you bags anymore?" Like most city

residents, Gallardo Chávez thinks protecting the environment is "very good." But plastic bags in Mexico City are almost never really single-use: most city residents have bought garbage cans and waste paper baskets just the right size to be lined with supermarket bags. And the bags are commonly used to clean up after dogs on sidewalks. "We use the bags for garbage, to separate it into organic and inorganic, and then take it out to the garbage truck," he notes.

Hernández, the environment official, said people should get out of the habit of putting their garbage in plastic bags. "They can take it out (to the garbage

truck) directly in garbage cans."

But that is complicated given the city's stubborn water shortages. It's all very well to tell city residents not to line their trash cans with plastic bags, but washing out a kitchen receptacle every couple of days after use because it doesn't have a plastic liner will take its toll on water supplies.

Not to mention the widespread habit of tossing used toilet paper into wastepaper baskets to spare the strain on many homes' aged and insufficient plumbing. Used toilet paper is not the kind of thing you can turn over loose to the trash collector. Data analysis specialist

Daniel Loredó says he is planning to hoard his last remaining plastic shopping bags precisely for that purpose. But he and his roommates have already taken steps to build up a supply of reusable bags and make sure whoever goes to the grocery store is carrying a few. But for poorer city residents, forgetting to do so even one day could carry a high price in a country where the 75-cent reusable bag costs the equivalent of an hour's worth of the minimum wage.

"I think this will be a challenge, because these bags represent an additional cost, and maybe not everyone can bear that cost quite as easily," Loredó said.

Aldimir Torres, the leader of the country's Plastic Industry Chamber, called the new law "cheap populism," noting that it was drawn up without having clear guidelines about what kind of "compostable" bags would still be allowed.

The law leaves the door open to using plastic bags "for reasons of hygiene," presumably for items like deli meats or cheese. It also allows for bags that biodegrade very quickly, but sets no specific standards for them.

"This was a law that was copied and put together in a rush, without consulting people who really know about this issue," Torres said. □

Panama Canal marks 20 years of US handover amid water crisis



In this Dec. 6, 2019 photo, a U.S. military Black Hawk helicopter flies over the Pacific side of the Panama Canal as it travels to the Darien province to provide a humanitarian assistance in Panama.

Associated Press

By **JUAN ZAMORANO**
Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Panama marked the 20-year

anniversary Tuesday of the turnover of the Panama Canal, now amid a water crisis that threatens the viability of the waterway.

Declining rainfall and rising temperatures have reduced the level of freshwater lakes that fill the locks of the Panama Canal and allow boats to transit between the Pacific and the Atlantic.

While Panama has been successful at running — and expanding — the canal after the U.S. handed over control, it now must face a new challenge: to

find a new source of water for the locks. The anniversary of the Dec. 31, 1999, handover comes amid months of water-depth restrictions that limit what the cargo ships using the waterway can carry. Changes in climate — and a recent expansion to allow bigger ships to pass — may have finally caught up with the canal's 105-year-old design, in which the artificial Gatun Lake functions as part of the ship passage and also provides drinking water for about half the country.

"The rainfall over the canal watershed is just not enough to keep the expanded canal operating, much less any further expansion," said analyst and hydroelectric dam expert José Isabel Blandón. "Panama has to start looking at this problem, because the lakes also provide drinking water for two million people." It could affect the competitiveness of the canal. Ricarte Vásquez, who heads the canal administration, said the coming dry season could prove a test. □

LOCAL



Lights are ON for Carnival!



ORANJESTAD — The streets of Oranjestad are going to be filled with lights on Saturday January 4th, 2020. The official opening of the carnival season takes off with the Torch Parade. Ten carnival groups participate, each with their own theme in outfit. The Torch Parade is an easy going parade where the costumes are mostly decorated T-shirts in certain colors. But.... This is just a warming up for the most colorful, creative, inspiring parades that are to come. The route of this parade is in Oranjestad: Starts at 8PM at Aruba Entertainment Center in Dakota - Vondellaan - L.G. Smith Boulevard - ex-DOW building - Wendy's.

The island is known for its white-sanded beaches and perfect climate, but there is one time in the year that Aruba draws thousands of visitors: carnival. If you have never been here before, come in carnival season as your experience will be amazing. Sensational musical events, queen elections and different parades are all part of this spectacular phenomenon. Carnival is part of Aruba's history and cultural heritage, actually it is the largest cultural festival on the island. For the islanders

it is a way to express their creativity and break away from the daily buzz of life. Dancing to the rhythm of local music while enjoying the ambiance of the public are some of the ingredients



of this festival. Oranjestad and San Nicolas are the stages for this display of unique designed costumes, amazing ambience and upbeat, local music. The festival is for everybody accessible and safe to visit. Behind the screens there is an enormous organization that makes sure that this festival runs smoothly. The police, inspection department, Red Cross volunteers, garbage service and many others work day and night to make sure that carnival

is a success. All the trailers are being carefully inspected before they are allowed to participate as well as the vehicles that pull them. After each parade the streets are being cleaned and road blocks are being taken away so next day normal traffic flow occurs. The several organizations and institutions work together with the official carnival organization SMAC.

History

In the 1920's the first carnival

events were organized by social clubs that started private costume and masquerade parties. This year we celebrate Aruba's 66th carnival, which means that the first grand parade took place in 1955. Since then Aruba's carnival has grown big and is now able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the most renowned Carnival celebrations around the world. Aruba Today has put the coming carnival events for you in a row:

Jan 4	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Torch Parade	Oranjestad
Jan 10	7:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Prins & Pancho Elections	San Nicolas
Jan 11	5:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Children & Youth Calypso & Roadmarch	San Nicolas
Jan 12	6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Paradera Queen Elections	Paradera
Jan 13	7:00 PM - 10:00 PM	EPI Queen Elections	Paradera
Jan 17	7:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Children & Youth Queen Elections	San Nicolas
Jan 18	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Aruba's 66 Carnival Queen & Mrs. Carnival Elections	San Nicolas
Jan 19	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Parada di Blaas	San Nicolas
Jan 24	7:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Tumberito Festival	San Nicolas
Jan 27	8:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Pre- Final Caiso & Soca Monarch	San Nicolas
Jan 28	8:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Pre- Final Caiso & Soca Monarch	San Nicolas
Jan 29	8:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Pre- Final Caiso & Soca Monarch	San Nicolas
Jan 31	8:00 PM - 3:00 AM	Finals Caiso Monarch	San Nicolas
Feb 1	10:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Reina di Scol	Paradera
Feb 1	8:00 PM - 3:00 AM	Super Saturday Soca Finals	San Nicolas
Feb 5	8:00 PM - 12:00 AM	La Ora Loca Jump Up	Santa Cruz
Feb 7	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Grand Tumba Contest	San Nicolas
Feb 8	2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Children's Parade Noord	Noord
Feb 8	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Unity Flag Fest	San Nicolas
Feb 9	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Transfer of Command	Oranjestad
Feb 9	2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Grand Children's Parade	San Nicolas
Feb 12	6:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Sunset Parade	Noord
Feb 14	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Welcome to Jouvert	San Nicolas
Feb 15	4:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Jouvert Morning	San Nicolas
Feb 15	8:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Lighting Parade	Oranjestad
Feb 16	2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Grand Children's Parade	Oranjestad
Feb 16	7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Burning of Momito	APA
Feb 19	1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Jump Up Escolar	Dakota
Feb 19	8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Jump Up Dakota	Dakota
Feb 20	8:00 PM - 2:00 AM	Parada di Luz	San Nicolas
Feb 21	8:00 PM - 1:00 AM	Hebbe Hebbe	TBA
Feb 21	9:30 PM - 2:30 AM	Kiwanis Masquerade Ball	Renaissance C.C
Feb 22	11:00 AM - 6:00 PM	San Nicolas Grand Parade	San Nicolas
Feb 23	11:00 AM - 6:00 PM	Aruba's 66th Grand Parade	Oranjestad
Feb 24	2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Burn Out Monday (Carnival Monday)	Baby Beach
Feb 25	7:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Old Mask Parade & Burning of Momo	San Nicolas

Urgent Care Aruba (UCA) at the Noord Medical Center continues to expand its portfolio and is now offering Gynecology Services



ORANJESTAD — After recently introducing our Radiology and Ultrasounds services, Urgent Care Aruba (UCA) at the Noord Medical Center, is proud to announce its private Gynecology services by focusing on Women's Health and making another service more accessible to the community of Aruba and our visitors from abroad.

With the new Gynecology Department, UCA can now offer another alternative in scope of care in Women's Health on the island. A Gynecologist specializes in the health and disease of the female's reproductive system. Dealing with a wide range of issues, including obstetrics, pregnancy, family planning, menstruation and fertility issues, sexually transmitted infections, hormone disorder, among others. Building up a relationship with the doctor enables a girl or woman to be comfortable asking questions about menstruation, sexuality and so on, and provides a point of contact if symptoms occur in future. The Gynecology Department under guidance of Dr. Marcela Realpe, will be available for consultation, screening tests for cervical cancer, gynecological and obstetric ultrasound, breast ultrasound, pap test, insertion or removal of subdermal implants for planning, and much more. Dr. Realpe is a registered specialist Gynecologist complying to requirements, regulations, and protocols set by the Department of Public Health of Aruba (DVG) and with consent of the Minister of Public Health, Tourism and Sport Mr. Dangui Oduber. The department will formally open on January 2nd, 2020 and will provide you with same-next day appointments, and these can be easily schedule now either online or by calling +297-597-5549.

About Urgent Care Aruba (UCA)

UCA, established in 2013, located at the Noord Medical Center carries one main objective by offering medical attention to the community of Aruba, as well as the tourist industry. Services offered at UCA are for patients suffering from medical conditions that do not justified to visit the local Emergency Department or not wanting to wait for a next day consultation or evaluation.

For more information, questions, or price contact telephone number: +297 5860448 or email info@urgentcare.aw. Visit www.urgentcare.aw or Facebook Urgent Care Aruba for more relevant news and information.

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ORANJESTAD – Did you know Aruba Today has a Facebook page and website. We would love to welcome you to our online community!

The cover picture of the Facebook page will show another picture of a local photographer every couple of months. We love culture and like to support our local talents, therefore Aruba Today chooses to be a platform for showcasing art. Photographer Armando Goedge-

drag took the new cover picture of Aruba Today's Facebook page, following the former local talents that shot the cover picture: Michael-Anthony Fowler and Anuar Habibe. Armando's goal is to create awareness about Aruban nature, especially with the youth and therefore he visits schools and he is member of Korteweg, an organization of young artists aiming to bring art under the attention of the public. A short recap: he is an artist, film maker, body boarder and

surfer, nature lover and nature protector.

Aruba To Me Is

We would also like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island. Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special

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Aruba Today's Columnist

ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today has 5 great columnists that contribute to our newspaper with their knowledge and creativity. Please let us introduce to you **Thais, Anthony, Shanella, Joris and Steve**. They would for sure appreciate your comment on their columns so feel free to express yourself!



Creative Islander by Thais Franken

Currently, Thais Franken is a 23-year-old Aruban student at the University of Maastricht (UM). She is studying a Master of Science in Public Policy and Human Development in collaboration with the United Nations University (UNU). Back home, on the beautiful island of Aruba she completed her Bachelor of Arts in Organization, Governance & Management (OGM) at the University of Aruba (UA). She successfully graduated and defended her thesis titled "Placing Culture and Creativity at the Heart of the Aruban Sustainable Development" on July 6th 2018. Thais is very passionate about topics such as sustainability, innovation, culture and creativity. Next to her academic interests, she enjoys reading, writing, dancing and cooking.



Island Insight by Anthony Croes of Etnia Nativa

Anthony Croes is an Etnia Nativa based artist at Westpunt, originally from Companashi. As a child, he demonstrated a natural interest and respect for his old world heritage as well as his natives' ancestor's history and their survival challenges. This same interest encouraged him to pursue anthropological studies as an academic call. For someone with such interest in cultural expressions it is no surprising that Aruba Today welcomed him as a columnist.



Hotel Hustle by Shanella Pantophlet

Shanella Pantophlet is passionate about tourism. That is the world she studied and works in, so we might as well call her a specialist. Luckily for Aruba Today Shanella also loves to write. And together with the fact that the majority of our readers are tourists, we found ourselves a perfect combination for a column: Hotel Hustle.



Hotel Hustle

Today's Catch by Joris Zandvoort

Dutch Joris Zandvoort is a writer at Fisherbooker.com. He writes a monthly fisher report for Aruba Today. The company works with 17 captains in Aruba that help him create this report containing information like: What is currently in the water? What can you catch? Also amazing pictures are being shared and part of the column shows The Captain of The Month.



Today's Click by Steve Francees

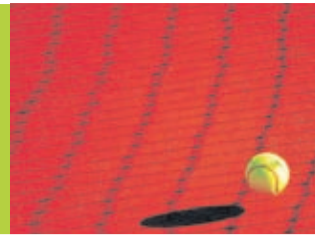
Aruban born and bred Steve Francees has a passion for photography. Being a local photographer he knows the hidden gems of this island and captures them in an amazing way. As a Family and Landscape photographer Steve is ready to create your next 'vacation memories', morning and/or sunset shots.

We invite you to go to our website www.arubatoday.com and read all their great articles. ☐



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SPORTS



This photo, taken on Jan. 11, 2017, by an Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources game camera, shows two golden eagles at a deer carcass at Freedom Hills Wildlife Management Area in Alabama.
Associated Press

Larsen, who threw only perfect World Series game, dies at 90

NEW YORK (AP) — Don Larsen, the journeyman pitcher who reached the heights of baseball glory when he threw a perfect game in 1956 with the New York Yankees for the only no-hitter in World Series history, died Wednesday night. He was 90. He died of esophageal cancer while in hospice in Hayden, Idaho, said Larsen's agent, Andrew Levy. In a Christmas Day message on social media, son Scott Larsen said his father was diagnosed with cancer soon after his annual trip to St. Louis in August to the St. Louis Browns Historical Society. He had recently completed radiation therapy. Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement Thursday that Larsen's perfect game has "remained unique for 63 years and counting."

Continued on Page 23



GARDEN PARTY

Knicks spoil Anthony's return to MSG, win 3rd straight

New York Knicks forward Bobby Portis (1) leaps high above Portland Trail Blazers guard CJ McCollum (3) to block a shot but gets charged with a foul during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York, Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020.

Associated Press
Page 19

Remembering David Stern, and some of his top accomplishments

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Nick Nurse has quite a few reasons to be thankful for David Stern. The coach of the NBA champion Toronto Raptors first encountered Stern around 20 years ago. Nurse, who was coaching in London, met Stern — then the NBA commissioner — through a mutual friend and remembers how fascinating it was to have conversations with him. Fast forward a few years, and Nurse had an idea to bring a team from what was then called the NBA Development League to his native Iowa.

Stern and the NBA liked the idea. The Iowa team was born. Nurse was its first coach. The rest is history. And Nurse is one of countless people reflecting now on Stern's impact, after the man who ran the NBA for 30 years died on Wednesday about three weeks following a brain hemorrhage.

"There's no denying how much he grew the game. He was the leader behind all that," Nurse said. "Obviously, lots of important people play important roles there, but still, somebody's got to lead that thing and he was doing that at a level that was unseen." For all of Stern's accomplishments — and there are many — growth of the game may be the biggest one of all. Nurse is the perfect example. If what is now called



In this Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2013 file photo, Former Boston Celtics basketball player Bill Russell, left, hugs National Basketball Association Commissioner David Stern during an award ceremony for the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Mass.

Associated Press

the G League wasn't born, at Stern's behest, then Nurse probably wouldn't be coaching the reigning champions right now. And if Stern didn't push to reach out into more markets, including Canada, then the Raptors might not even exist.

"This was his baby," Toronto guard Kyle Lowry said. "He helped grow this thing into what it is today. And you've got to give him a lot — I wouldn't say all — but a whole lot of the credit." Stern, when he stepped down as commissioner,

said growth of the league was his top achievement. "My greatest accomplishment was in hiring the now 1,200 people — that used to be 24 — that have taken the league to where it is," he said.

Some of Stern's other accomplishments of note:

ALL-STAR WEEKEND

Stern turned the NBA's All-Star Game — which long predated his work with the league — into a weekend festival. The slam dunk contest was added in 1984, the 3-point contest in 1986, what started as the rookie

game arrived in 1994 and the skills contest was born in 2003.

The game itself, always held on Sunday night to cap the weekend, is now just a part of the show.

"It was a showcase of what David Stern knew was the backbone of the NBA — its stars," Larry Bird, the first 3-point contest winner, said in 2014.

EQUALITY

Boston's Bill Russell was arguably the first black player to achieve superstar status in the NBA, though Stern always wasn't a fan. He

rooted for the Knicks, not the Celtics, and thought Harry Gallatin was a better player.

"That's what fanship does," Stern said.

In the end, Russell might have become Stern's favorite player.

Stern loved Russell. He loved the way he expressed his political views. He loved his grouchiness. And when Stern saw the way Russell and Bob Cousy — a star white guard for Boston — played seamlessly together, he had a realization.

"Our sport was under duress because people said it was getting too black," Stern said in his Hall of Fame induction speech. "I remembered this guy named Russell who played with this other guy named Cousy. The best basketball that I think ever existed in the world and it dawned on me that we had something to teach the world."

With that, equality — all sorts of it, including racial and gender — became a passion of Stern's. He championed the creation of the WNBA. He was Magic Johnson's biggest advocate when the Lakers star announced he had been diagnosed with HIV in 1991. And he supported Johnson when he returned to the league after his first retirement, plus pushed for him to be part of the first Olympic "Dream Team" in 1992. "We were able to change the world," Johnson said. □

Doncic, Antetokounmpo the early All-Star vote leaders

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Dallas' Luka Doncic received fan votes than any other player in the opening week of balloting for the NBA All-Star Game.

The NBA released the first voting totals on Thursday and Doncic has received 1,073,957 — 599 more than Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo.

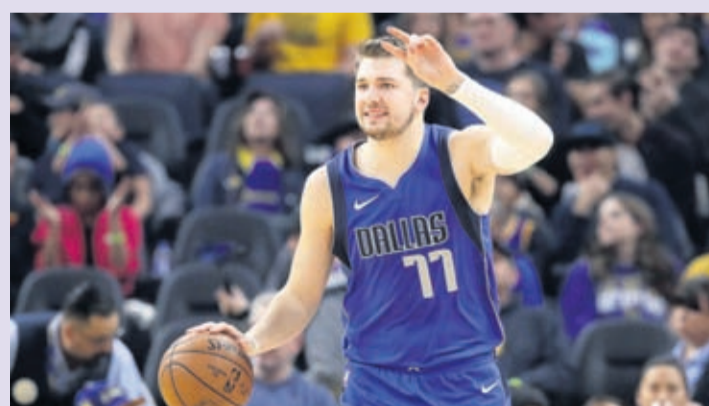
LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers is the only other player to top the

million-vote mark so far, putting him well on his way to what would be a 16th consecutive All-Star appearance. James, Lakers teammate Anthony Davis and the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard are the runaway leaders in the Western Conference frontcourt. Doncic and Houston's James Harden also are off to enormous leads in the West guards race.

In the East, Antetokounmpo, Philadelphia's

Joel Embiid and Toronto's Pascal Siakam are the leaders for the three starting frontcourt spots. Atlanta's Trae Young has gotten the most votes so far in the East guard race, about 11,000 ahead of Brooklyn's Kyrie Irving. Boston's Kemba Walker is 450 votes back of Irving.

Other notables from the first week of fan voting, which began on Christmas Day: Boston's Tacko Fall is sixth in the East frontcourt



Dallas Mavericks forward Luka Doncic (77) dribbles upcourt against the Golden State Warriors during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Saturday, Dec. 28, 2019.

Associated Press

balloting, Golden State's Stephen Curry is fourth in the West guard vote so far despite being sidelined by

injury, and Portland's Carmelo Anthony is holding the No. 8 spot in the West frontcourt race. □

Knicks beat Trail Blazers 117-93, spoil Carmelo's return

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Mitchell Robinson made all 11 shots and had 22 points, Julius Randle added 22 points and 13 rebounds, and the New York Knicks spoiled Carmelo Anthony's return to Madison Square Garden by beating the Portland Trail Blazers 117-93 on Wednesday night for their season-high third straight victory.

Anthony scored 26 points, his most since returning to the NBA, and was cheered before and during the game at the arena where he played 6 1/2 seasons.

But he was on the bench at the start of the Knicks' 14-0 run early in the fourth quarter that broke open the game.

Reggie Bullock made two 3-pointers during the spurt and scored 11 points in his Knicks debut. He signed with the team during the summer but hadn't played because of a herniated disk.

Portland's Damian Lillard was held to 11 points on 5-for-20 shooting after scoring 30 or more in the previous three games. The All-Star guard did have 10 rebounds and eight assists,



New York Knicks center Mitchell Robinson (23) dunks in front of Portland Trail Blazers center Hassan Whiteside (21) and guards Damian Lillard (0) and Anfernee Simons (1) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York, Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020.

Associated Press

but he missed his first six 3-pointers before making his only one of the game as the final shot of the third quarter.

LAKERS 117, SUNS 107

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James had 31 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists for his eighth triple-double of the season, Anthony Davis had 26 points and 11 rebounds, and the West-

leading Los Angeles Lakers beat Phoenix.

James had double-figure points and assists by halftime as the Lakers won their third straight.

The Suns rallied in the fourth, getting within seven points after trailing by 36 earlier in the game. That forced the Lakers' starters back in, and James steadied them with eight points to close out the

win. Devin Booker scored 32 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 26 for the Suns. Phoenix had won two in a row after losing eight straight.

MAGIC 122, WIZARDS 101

WASHINGTON (AP) — D.J. Augustin scored a season-high 25 points, Nikola Vucevic added 20 points and 12 rebounds and Or-

lando snapped a four-game road losing streak. Bradley Beal, who missed the previous two games with soreness in his right leg, led Washington with 27 points.

The Magic, who entered the game with the NBA's poorest offense, took the lead midway through the second quarter and led 62-58 at halftime. Orlando steadily increased its lead in the second half.

Evan Fournier had 18 points for Orlando. Markelle Fultz scored 16 and Terrence Ross 15.

BUCKS 106, TIMBERWOLVES 104

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 17 rebounds, and Milwaukee held off a strong challenge from short-handed Minnesota.

Antetokounmpo got his 30th double-double in 33 games this season and Kris Middleton added 13 points despite shooting 5 for 18 as Milwaukee hit just 42.6% of its shots overall and only 9 of 36 from 3-point range. Shabazz Napier had 22 points to lead Minnesota, and Gorgui Deng scored 15, Josh Okogie added 12 and Jarret Culver 10. □

Zion Williamson returns to practice, raising Pelicans' hopes

By BRETT MARTEL
AP Sports Writer

METAIRIE, La. (AP) — Zion Williamson returned to practice with the New Orleans Pelicans on Thursday for the first time since he had arthroscopic knee surgery shortly before the season.

But the NBA's top overall draft choice out of Duke cannot yet say when he'll make his regular-season debut. "I felt really good out there," he said.

Williamson, 6-foot-6 and 285 pounds, said he first must pass "assessments" by team medical staff before the decision can rest solely with him.

"It will probably be one of those moments, where, just like when it came to

my college decision, I woke up and I'll just know," Williamson said.

Coach Alvin Gentry said Williamson participated fully in the on-court work, but the practice wasn't particularly strenuous. It was the last practice before New Orleans flew to Los Angeles to play the Lakers on Friday night.

Gentry said Williamson is not expected to play on the two-game trip that includes a stop in Sacramento on Saturday. New Orleans plays at home on Monday night against Utah. Gentry said the club needs to "see what kind of progress he makes, see what happens after he goes through practices."

"I know that he's making

progress. That's the thing that matters most," Gentry said. "He's moving good, but obviously there's going to always be some reservations until you get full confidence in what you're doing. ... He practiced and that's a good start."

Williamson has never been shy about his eagerness to return to the court and described an internal struggle between his youthful exuberance and longer-term considerations.

"It's been a hard balance because I am 19," Williamson began. "But from a professional standpoint, I do have to look at longevity." Williamson is relatively heavy for an NBA player, never mind one who moves well and often



Injured New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson, left, and guard Jrue Holiday watch from the bench during the second half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Denver Nuggets on Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2019, in Denver. The Pelicans won 112-100.

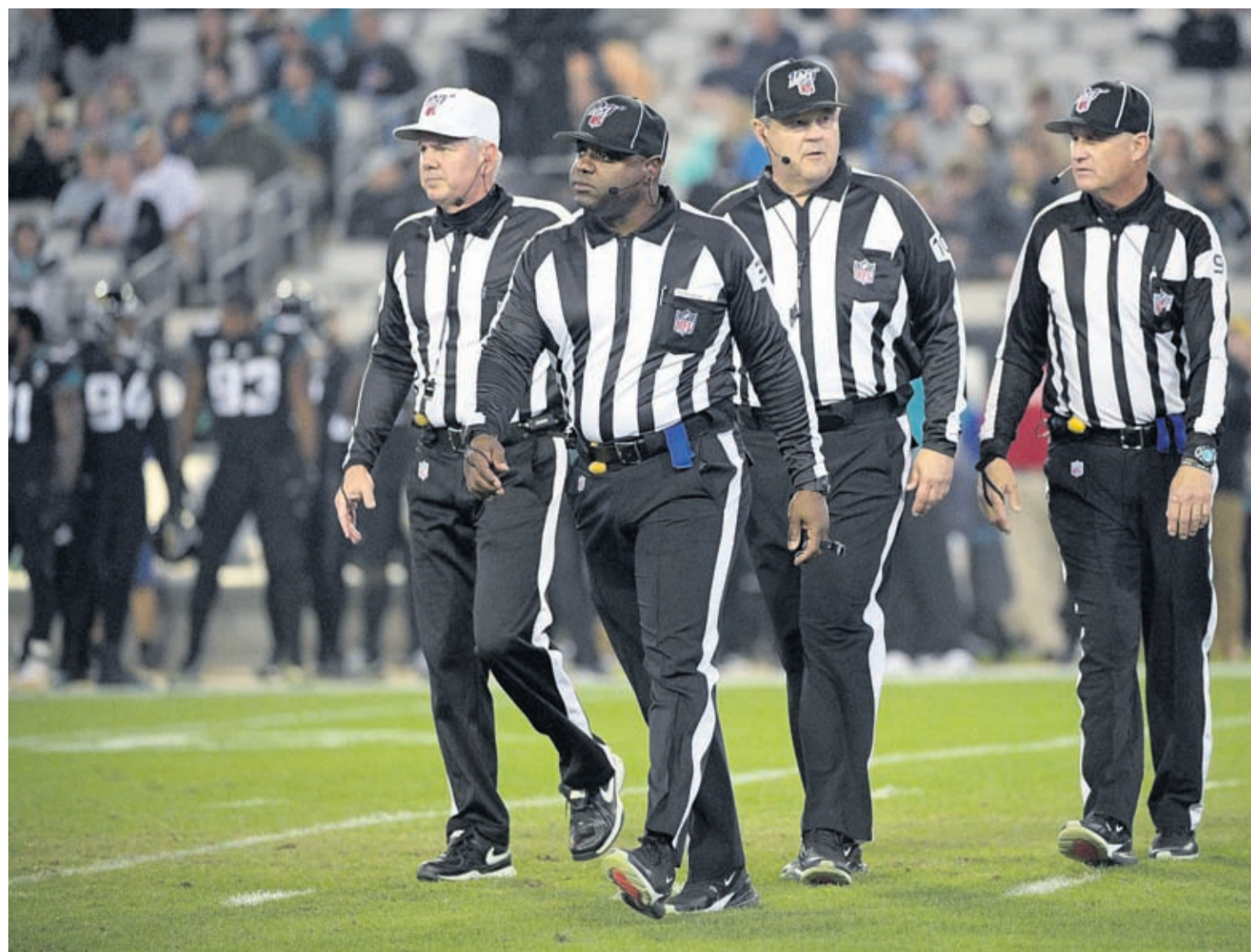
Associated Press

soars above the rim for the kind of dunks that have made him an internet sensation since high school in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The purpose of his surgery was to repair cartilage that serves as natural padding in the knee joint. So the club has taken a

cautious approach to his rehabilitation in hopes of minimizing the possibility of a setback.

Williamson played in four preseason games before his injury, averaging 23.3 points and 6.5 rebounds. He had surgery in mid-October. □

Column: Officiating won't get any better _ because it can't



In this Dec. 8, 2019, file photo, referee Bill Vinovich, left, field judge Mearl Robinson (31), umpire Bruce Stritesky (102) and line judge Mark Perlman (9) walk to the sideline after a play during the second half of an NFL football game between the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Los Angeles Chargers, in Jacksonville, Fla. Save the outrage for something else.

Associated Press

By **JIM LITKE**
AP Sports Columnist

Save the outrage for something else. NFL officiating won't get any better this weekend, or anytime soon — because it can't.

We shouldn't have to remind people at this late date that nobody is perfect, but there you are. Besides, officials are a lot closer to that standard than the players and coaches. You can look it up.

So consider this a public-service announcement — or else a cry for help — for the guys dressed up like zebras. Because they're barred from speaking out in public and the league's higher-ups are too tight-fisted and conflicted to do it themselves.

"I think the officiating community feels like it's under attack," said Dean Blandino, a Fox Sports rules analyst who was NFL vice president of officiating from 2013-17.

"They were under intense

scrutiny before. I know that firsthand. But with the advent of social media, all the other platforms and all the talking heads on TV — myself included — this season feels a little more ... intense. "And frankly," Blandino summed up, "I didn't think it was possible."

Referees know going in they'll never get their due, but there's some consolation. In the league's 100th anniversary season, despite a glitzy ad campaign, game plans as detailed as an MRI, and players so swift and strong they take your breath away, all anybody wants to talk about is officiating.

"Let's say you volunteered to be a ref, because you think it's noble or maybe just to help out in your kid's league," said Mike Pereira, another Fox rules analyst and one of Blandino's predecessors as VP of officiating.

"On day one, you're be-
rated by parents from the

sideline, or chased off the field, and then asking yourself, 'Who needs this?'" he sighed. "And people wonder why there's a shortage of officials."

Try thumbing through the NFL rulebook some time to determine what constitutes a catch. After several controversial "was-it-or-wasn't-it" calls — alternatively known as "the Dez Bryant play," "the Calvin Johnson play" or "the Jesse James play" — the NFL's competition committee overhauled the rule in 2017, but the debate still simmers.

That hardly stopped the league from dipping a toe into even-murkier waters this past offseason and tackling the even more-subjective question of what constitutes pass interference. The impetus was a blown call in the 2019 NFC championship game, when Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman mugged Saints receiver Tommy Lee Lewis before the ball ar-

rived and got off scot-free. Except the committee didn't bother changing the wording of the pass interference rule; it simply tacked on a layer of instant replay. Unfortunately, no matter how much technology you insert between the two, so long as humans make the first decision and the last, it's still a judgment call.

"Instant replay was already there when I got the job in 2001," Pereira said, "and I was a big proponent. But now, I think it's actually hurt the game. ...

"It was brought in to determine facts and locate the ball — what we called 'lines, ground and planes.' ... The league took one big step into judgment when it allowed replay to decide what's a catch. Now there's another, and that's blown up, too.

"Maybe," Pereira concluded, "we should have stopped with lines, ground and planes."

Blandino agrees the lat-

est brouhaha wasn't hard to see coming. "I hate to even reference that (NFC championship game) play, but the new rule seemed like a knee-jerk response, like they never got around to vetting the unintended consequences."

For the first two-thirds of the season, coaches burned challenges, broadcast crews shrugged and fans raged when more pass interference calls weren't forthcoming. Meanwhile, league officials — both on the field and in the replay booth — struggled to defend what was always going to be a judgment call. And not just once, but often twice, and sometimes differing judgments.

Then, even as the furor was dying down, Seahawks tight end Jacob Hollister and 49ers linebacker Fred Warner got tangled up in the end zone in the final regular-season game — on the second-to-last-play — with the seeding order of the NFC hanging in the balance. It was exactly the kind of play the new rule was put in to decide.

But there was no call on the field and Al Riveron, the league's third officiating chief in the past eight years, looked at it on a screen in New York and deemed it not worth a formal review. Twitter erupted again, and this time, even Hall of Fame coach and current NBC analyst Tony Dungy piled on.

"Still shaking my head at non-Pass Interference call in the last minute of the 49ers-Seahawks game. NFL Office put us through a season of inconsistent reversals but this is what the rule was supposed to fix-missed call that impacted playoff spots of 4 teams. Why have review??"

Why indeed?

"Here's the funny thing," Pereira said. "After all the fuss, if you go back and look at Week 17, I'd say it was the best week the officials had all season. Then along comes that next-to-last play.

"We almost made it all the way through," he said, then paused. "Almost." □

'Patriot Way,' burgeoning 'Titan Way' collide in playoffs

By **KYLE HIGHTOWER**

AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP)

— When Tennessee GM Jon Robinson fired coach Mike Mularkey after he lost to the Patriots in the divisional round of the playoffs following the 2017 season, he leaned on his past to plot a course for the Titans' future.

Five days later Robinson, who got his NFL start as a scout with New England from 2002-13, hired Mike Vrabel — winner of three Super Bowl rings as a linebacker with the Patriots — as his new coach.

With former Patriots cornerback Logan Ryan already on the roster, Vrabel added more players and staff with ties to New England. That group included former Patriots assistant Dean Pees as his defensive coordinator, 2015 Super Bowl savior cornerback Malcolm Butler, and running back Dion Lewis.

It seemed like a transparent effort to plant seeds in Tennessee of New England coach Bill Belichick's disciplined, team-first "Do your job" culture that has come to be known as "The Patriot Way."

"Isn't that the street the movie theater is on?" Vrabel joked this week when asked what the moniker meant to him.

Two seasons later the efforts of Robinson and Vrabel, combined with a boost from former Miami Dolphins quarterback and Patriots' AFC East nemesis Ryan Tannehill, have culminated in a wild-card matchup Saturday with the franchise the Titans appear to be striving to emulate.

True or not, Vrabel said the ties between the teams aren't on his mind.

"This isn't about my career, my eight years in New England," said Vrabel, who coached the Titans to a 34-10 win over New England in Nashville last season.

"This is about the Titans and our preparation to go up there and face a team that's won three Super Bowls in the last five years. They're 8-0 at home in that span.

They've got the No. 1 defense, they've got the best coach, they've got the best

You've got to give all you got. It's not a best of seven, it's not a best of five."

he isn't thinking about the future beyond Saturday. The 42-year-old has more

They've averaged 406.2 yards of total offense with Tannehill as a starter, third behind Dallas (424.1) and Tampa Bay (416).

Tannehill not only led the NFL with a career-best 117.5 passer rating, Pro Bowl running back Derrick Henry led the league with 1,540 yards rushing. They also have a 1,000-yard receiver in rookie A.J. Brown, who ranked second in the NFL averaging 20.2 yards per catch.

NO NEED FOR KICKER

The Titans are on their fourth kicker this season, though Greg Joseph has yet to attempt a field goal since being signed to replace Ryan Succop.

Tennessee is last in the NFL converting a horrible 44% of field goals. It helps that the Titans lead the NFL in scoring touchdowns in the red zone at a clip of 75.5%.

BIG PLAY FOCUS

Tennessee also led the league with nine pass plays of 50 or more yards.

Brown has four touchdown catches of at least 50 yards, joining Isaac Curtis (five in 1973), Willie Gault (four in 1983) and Hall of Famer Randy Moss (five in 1998) as the only rookies with at least four such TDs since the merger.

Overall, the Titans were fourth in the league with 121 big plays (runs of 10 or more yards or passing plays of 20 or more yards).

New England's defense was fourth in the NFL, allowing opponents to score on 48.3% of their red zone opportunities. The Patriots have allowed only three passing plays of 50 or more yards.

HEALING UP

The Titans have been limited in the secondary since Butler broke his left wrist Nov. 3 in a loss at Carolina. Then starter Adoree' Jackson hurt a foot Dec. 1 in a win at Indianapolis, which kept him out of the past four games. Jackson has practiced fully this week. His return would allow Tennessee to use Tramaine Brock Sr., a waiver wire pickup from Arizona, for depth instead of starting opposite Ryan. □



In this Nov. 11, 2018, file photo, Tennessee Titans head coach Mike Vrabel, left, greets New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick before an NFL football game in Nashville, Tenn.

Associated Press

quarterback, so it's quite a challenge."

The Patriots will face one of the hottest teams heading into the postseason. The Titans won seven of their final 10 games to earn their second playoff berth in three seasons and first under Vrabel.

Ryan was drafted by the Patriots in 2013 and spent the first four seasons of his career in New England, winning Super Bowl rings during the 2014 and 2016 seasons. He said he's carried lessons from his time with the Patriots that stick with him.

"It's a new season, and we have to play well on Saturday. That's the one thing I learned from being a Patriot," he said. "It doesn't matter what you did, it doesn't matter if it's 'on to Cincinnati' or whatever it may be. It's one game at a time in the playoffs.

New England's loss to Miami in its regular-season finale relegated it to the wild-card round for the first time since 2009, when it lost 33-14 to Baltimore.

The Patriots are 2-1 in wild-card games under Belichick and that "best quarterback," Tom Brady, but have never made it to the Super Bowl when opening the playoffs as a wild-card team during their era.

"We have a chance to go on a revenge tour," Patriots linebacker Kyle Van Noy said. "What better way than to start out with Tennessee, who we lost to last year. It's a big motivation. We weren't happy about our performance.

They're coming into our house. What better way to get it started for the playoffs."

NO NOSTALGIA

As Brady prepares for his 17th postseason, he says

playoff victories (30) than each of the 11 other projected starting quarterbacks in this year's playoffs combined (26). But he also has a contract that expires following the season and could face entering free agency for the first time in his 20-year career.

"I'm not much for nostalgia," Brady said. "I'm just pretty focused on what I need to do.

This week has felt just like every other week for the last 20 years.... I haven't thought about those things. I wouldn't be thinking about those things anyway. It's felt like a normal week for me."

HIGH-POWERED OFFENSE

Tennessee found a different gear when Tannehill moved into the lineup. The Titans have averaged 6.94 yards per play since he moved into the starting lineup in Week 7 — best in the NFL in that span.



Buffalo Sabres defenseman Marco Scandella celebrates his goal against the Los Angeles Kings during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Buffalo, N.Y., Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019.

Associated Press

Sabres trade Marco Scandella to Montreal; acquire Flames' Frolik

By **JOHN WAWROW**
AP Hockey Writer

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres general manager Jason Botterill turned a defensive logjam into much-needed scoring depth with two trades Thursday to shake up his slumping team.

Buffalo freed up salary cap space by trading defenseman Marco Scandella to the Montreal Canadiens for a fourth-round draft pick. Botterill used the pick to acquire veteran forward Michael Frolik from the Calgary Flames.

"We've been talking a lot about trying to make a situation: a defenseman for a forward. Obviously, we brought in another team to make it happen, but certainly excited to have Michael a part of our group here," Botterill said during the first intermission of Buffalo's home game against Edmonton.

Scandella was the odd-man out on a team already carrying eight defensemen, one more than usual. In Frolik, the Sabres acquired a dependable veteran who has scored 15 or more goals in nine of his 12 seasons. He may also help

Buffalo's struggling special teams. "We haven't been very happy with the results at all," Botterill said. "I would say since coming back from the break I think our team's performed fairly well, but we haven't gotten results. So, you're always looking to try and find a fix."

Buffalo had lost four straight and was 1-6-1 in its past eight before playing Edmonton.

Buffalo entered the game with the NHL's 22nd ranked power play, which has converted 0 of 14 chances over its past five games. Buffalo's penalty-killing unit, meanwhile, ranks 28th and has allowed eight power-play goals in its past six games.

Frolik had just five goals and five assists in 38 games with the Flames. He is in the final year of a five-year, \$21 million contract.

The 29-year-old Scandella is also in the final year of a five-year, \$20 million contract and eligible to become an unrestricted free agent following this season. He's a 10-year veteran who was acquired by Buffalo in a multiplayer deal with the Minnesota Wild following

the 2016-17 season.

Scandella is a defensive-minded player who had just three goals and nine points in 31 games this season.

At 6-foot-3 and 212 pounds, Scandella provides additional size to a Canadiens' blue line that already includes Shea Weber.

Scandella fills the spot left open after the Canadiens dealt defenseman Mike Reilly to Ottawa earlier in the day. The Canadiens acquired forward Andrew Sturtz and a 2021 fifth-round pick from Ottawa.

Botterill said he was so intent on providing the Sabres a midseason spark, it didn't matter whether Scandella's addition helps Montreal, an Atlantic Division rival.

"We're in a situation here right now where we have to improve our own team," Botterill said.

The trade comes as the Sabres are slumping and players are complaining about their ice time. Defenseman Zach Bogosian asked to be traded last month and was followed by third-line forward Evan Rodrigues, who went public with his trade request Tuesday. □



This is a 2019 photo of Domingo German of the New York Yankees baseball team.

Associated Press

Yankees' German suspended 81 games for domestic violence

By **JAKE SEINER**
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Yankees pitcher Domingo Germán will miss the first 63 games of the 2020 season as part of an 81-game ban for violating Major League Baseball's domestic violence policy.

The league announced the suspension Thursday. Germán has agreed not to appeal.

Germán was put on administrative leave on Sept. 19 while MLB investigated an alleged domestic violence incident involving his girlfriend, with whom he has at least one child. He missed the final nine games of the 2019 regular season and all nine of New York's postseason games. Those missed games will count toward his ban.

The right-hander was the Yankees' winningest pitcher last season, going 18-4 with a 4.03 ERA in 24 starts and three relief appearances. The 27-year-old had a \$577,000 salary but will not be paid for the time he missed after being placed on leave. He is expected to make a similar salary for 2020 but again will not be paid while suspended.

Germán will be eligible to return June 5 against Tampa Bay, barring any postponements.

The Yankees said in a statement they "remain stead-

fast in our support" of MLB's investigative and disciplinary process regarding Germán.

"We are encouraged by Domingo's acceptance of his discipline, and we sincerely hope this indicates a commitment to making a meaningful and positive change in his personal conduct," the team said.

Germán will participate in a treatment program and will also make a contribution to Sanctuary for Families, a New York-based nonprofit group that aids victims of domestic violence.

Germán's ban is the longest levied by MLB under its domestic violence policy for a player who was not formally charged. Addison Russell of the Chicago Cubs was suspended 40 games spanning the 2018-19 seasons following a series of allegations by his ex-wife.

New York has been preparing to go on without Germán for much of 2020. The club signed right-hander Gerrit Cole to a \$324 million, nine-year contract last month, the largest deal ever for a pitcher for total dollars and average annual value. Cole is expected to be followed in the rotation by left-hander James Paxton and right-handers Masahiro Tanaka and Luis Severino, with lefties J.A. Happ and Jordan Montgomery also available. □

Larsen

Continued from Page 17

"On a team of many stars, Don illustrated that anyone can make history — even perfection — on our sport's biggest stage," Manfred said.

Larsen was the unlikeliest of characters to attain what so many Hall of Famers couldn't pull off in the Fall Classic. He was 81-91 lifetime, never won more than 11 games in a season and finished an unsightly 3-21 with Baltimore in 1954, the year before he was dealt to the Yankees as part of an 18-player trade.

In the 1956 World Series, won in seven games by the Yankees, he was knocked out in the second inning of Game 2 by the Brooklyn Dodgers and didn't think he would have another opportunity to pitch. But when he reached Yankee Stadium on the morning of Oct. 8, he found a baseball in his shoe, the signal from manager Casey Stengel that he would start Game 5.

"I must admit I was shocked," Larsen wrote in his autobiography. "I knew I had to do better than the last time, keep the game close and somehow give our team a chance to win. Casey was betting on me, and I was determined not to let him down this time." The Dodgers and Yankees split the first four games and Stengel liked the deception of Larsen's no-windup delivery. The manager's instincts proved correct. The lanky right-hander struck out seven, needed just 97 pitches to tame the Dodgers and only once went to three balls on a batter — against Pee Wee Reese in the first inning.

In winning 2-0, the Yankees themselves only managed five hits against the Dodgers' Sal Maglie, but scored on Mickey Mantle's home run and an RBI single by Hank Bauer.

Larsen, selected MVP of the 1956 Series, had two close calls. In the second inning, Jackie Robinson hit a hard grounder that was deflected by third baseman Andy Carey to shortstop Gil McDougald, who

threw out Robinson. In the fifth, Mantle ran down a long drive to left-center field by Gil Hodges. With two outs in the ninth, pinch-hitter Dale Mitchell took a third strike, completing the perfect game and sending catcher Yogi Berra dashing out from behind the plate to leap into Larsen's arms.

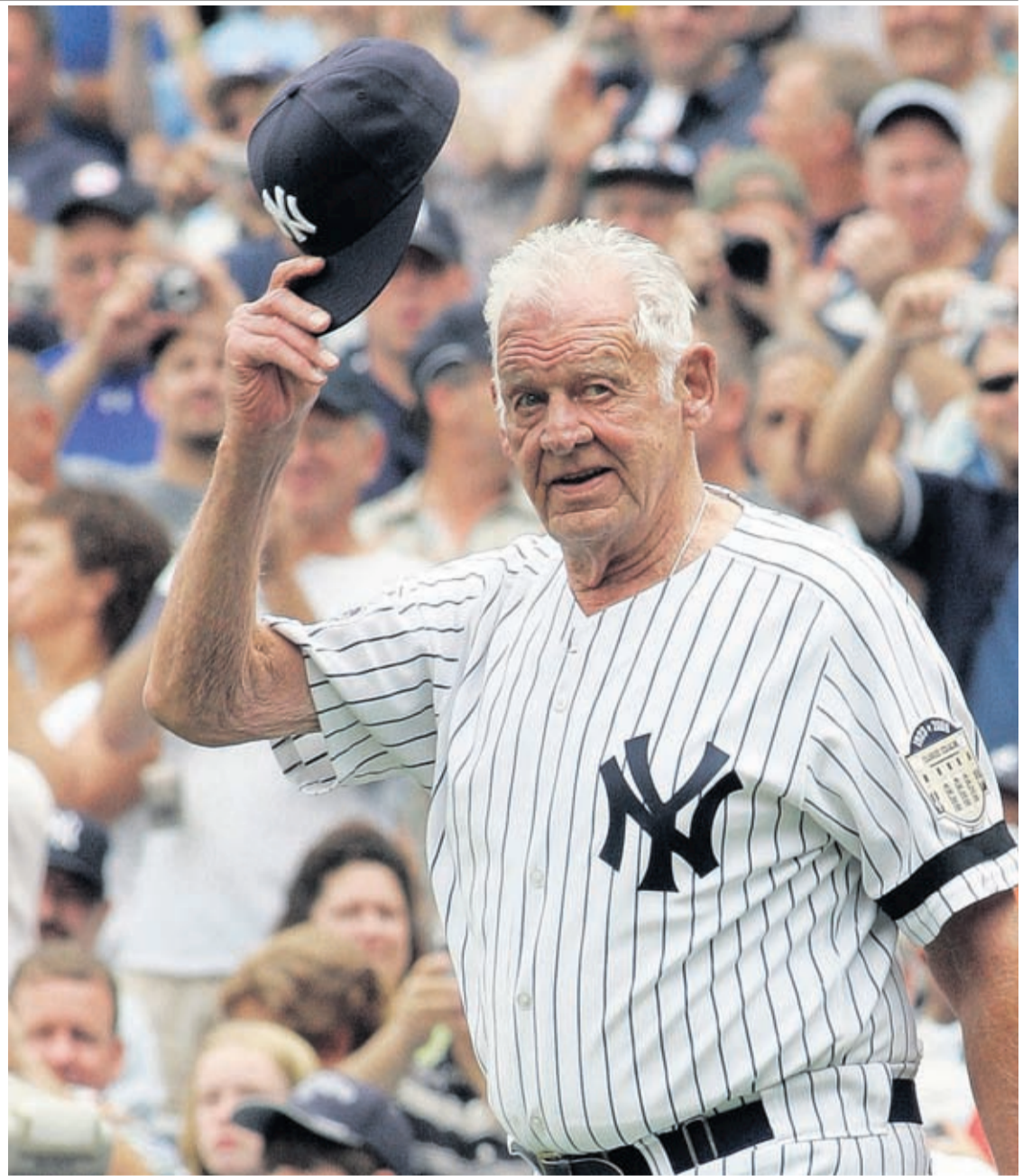
"When Yogi Berra jumped on me and grabbed with the bear hug, my mind went completely blank," Larsen wrote in his autobiography. "I was under friendly attack ... I was swept into the dugout."

Their celebration remains one of baseball's most joyous images.

"Don's perfect game is a defining moment for our franchise, encapsulating a storied era of Yankees success and ranking among the greatest single-game performances in Major League Baseball history," the Yankees said in a statement. "The unmitigated joy reflected in his embrace with Yogi Berra after the game's final out will forever hold a secure place in Yankees lore. It was the pinnacle of baseball success and a reminder of the incredible, unforgettable things that can take place on a baseball field."

Born Aug. 7, 1929, in Michigan City, Indiana, Larsen moved with his family to San Diego, where he went to Point Loma High School, the alma mater of another Yankees perfect game pitcher, David Wells. Larsen played basketball and baseball and was signed by the St. Louis Browns for a \$500 bonus and \$150 a month.

After two minor league seasons, Larsen hurt his arm and then spent two years in the Army. He was promoted to the Browns in 1953 and moved with the team to Baltimore the following year. He struggled through his 3-21 season but two of the wins were against the Yankees, who insisted he be included in the trade that also brought pitching star Bob Turley to New York. Larsen started 1955 with the Yankees' farm team in Denver, where he went 9-1 and



In this Aug. 2, 2008, file photo, Former New York Yankees pitcher Don Larsen tips his hat to fans during introduction ceremonies before an old-timers baseball game at Yankee Stadium in New York.

Associated Press

developed the no-windup delivery. Promoted to the majors midway through the season, he finished 9-2 for New York. Larsen went 11-5 the next season and enjoyed the party atmosphere that came with playing for the Yankees, often running with Mantle, Billy Martin and Whitey Ford in their late-night rounds of the city. On the night before his perfect game, he had been out on the town, believing he was not in Stengel's plans for the next day.

Larsen pitched in three other World Series. He won Game 2 in 1957 against Hank Aaron and the Milwaukee Braves, but lost the decisive Game 7. He shut out the Braves 4-0 on six hits in Game 3 of the 1958 Series, when New York beat Milwaukee in seven games, and was back in the Bronx with the San Francisco Giants for the 1962 Fall Classic.

Pitching against the Yankees on Oct. 8, the sixth anniversary of his perfect game, he won in relief at Yankee Stadium. After the 1959 season, he was traded to Kansas City in a deal that brought Roger Maris to New York. With the A's, he went 1-10 in 1960, a reminder of his dreadful season with the Orioles. He was sent back to the minors where he became a relief pitcher and then moved on to the Giants, Chicago White Sox, Houston, Baltimore and the Chicago Cubs.

Larsen retired in 1967 with an 81-91 record over 14 major league seasons. He later worked as a liquor salesman and paper company executive and regularly attended the Yankees' annual Old-Timers' Day celebrations.

When David Cone tossed a perfect game for the Yankees during the 1999 season, Larsen was in at-

tendance after throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

No other pitcher has thrown a perfect game in the postseason, but in 2010 the Phillies' Roy Halladay pitched a no-hitter against the Cincinnati Reds during the National League Division Series.

"They can never break my record," Larsen would say. "The best they can do is tie it. October 8, 1956, was a mystical trip through fantasyland. Sometimes I still wonder whether it really all happened."

Late on Wednesday night, Cone tweeted "RIP my friend" with a photo of himself, Wells and Larsen together on the field at Yankee Stadium.

In addition to his son, Larsen is survived by his wife of 62 years, Corrine; daughter-in-law Nancy; and grandsons Justin and Cody.

Funeral arrangements were pending. □

Beware of the smart device: Ways to stay private and safe

By **ANICK JESDANUN**

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Did someone invite a spy into your home over the holidays? Maybe so, if a friend or family member gave you a voice-controlled speaker or some other smart device.

It's easy to forget, but everything from internet-connected speakers with voice assistants such as Amazon's Alexa to television sets with built-in Netflix can be always listening — and sometimes watching, too.

As with almost all new technology, installing such devices means balancing privacy risks with the conveniences they offer.

The research firm IDC estimates worldwide shipments of 815 million smart speakers, security cameras and other devices in 2019, up 23% from 2018. Many of the sales are for gifts.

You could sidestep the risks altogether by returning the devices right away. But if you decide to keep them — and the artificial intelligence behind them — there are a few things you can do to minimize their eavesdropping potential.

THE SPEAKERS LISTEN ... AND WATCH

Smart speakers such as Amazon's Echo and Google Home let you check weather and appointments with simple voice commands. Fancier versions come with cameras and screens.

Many of these devices listen constantly for commands and connect to

background conversation as a command to send the chatter to an acquaintance

eras for video chats. When you're not using the device, consider turning it

ARE SMART LOCKS SMART?

Smart locks let you unlock doors with an app, so you can let in guests even when you're not home. Burglars might try to hack the system, though it's often easier for them to just break a window.

As a precaution, disable any capabilities to unlock doors through a smart speaker voice command, especially if you have prankster kids — or teens who might want to sneak someone in.

Though digital keys can be convenient for letting in guests and contractors, they can also leave a digital trail. In a child-custody dispute, for instance, your ex might subpoena the records to learn that you've been staying out late on school nights.

If you rent and create a guest key that's used daily, the landlord might suspect an unauthorized occupant.

ABOUT THOSE TVs

Many smart TVs and TV streaming devices come with mics for voice-activated playback controls and video search. That means having audio snippets transmitted over the internet.

The same warnings for smart speakers apply here. There's a simple fix if you aren't using the internet features on your smart TV: Just don't connect the TV to your Wi-Fi in the first place. Of course, this won't work if you're not using a separate gadget for streaming video.

TOYS THAT TALK

Kids might get a kick out of dolls and other toys that talk back. But if the toy is connected to the internet, pay attention to how much control it's giving parents and whether it's letting kids connect to the outside world.

You can check online to see if other parents or consumer groups have identified problems.

And be sure to install the latest apps and other software updates, as they may come with fixes for flaws that can otherwise be exploited by hackers. □



In this May 9, 2018, file photo a second generation Echo that controls the blinds as well as televisions and lighting at an Amazon Experience Centers model home in Dallas, Texas.

Associated Press

corporate servers to carry them out. Typically, they will ignore private chatter and transmit sound recordings only when you trigger the device, such as by pressing a button or speaking a command phrase like "OK Google." Some gadgets also have a mute button to disable the microphones completely.

But there's no easy way for consumers to verify those safeguards. In one case, the Alexa assistant in an Echo device misheard

— and so it did. One more catch: Voice commands sent over the internet are typically stored indefinitely and may include conversations in the background. They can be sought in lawsuits and investigations.

Reputable companies let you review and delete your voice history, Amazon now lets you request automatic deletions after three or 18 months — but you need to set that up, and there's no option to keep Amazon from saving your command history at all.

Until recently, tech companies allowed employees and contractors to review the voice interactions for quality control — and some of those details leaked. Following a backlash, many companies are at least making it clearer and easier to opt out of human review. Pay attention to your choices.

If you have kids, set up a passcode for shopping if your speaker allows it. Otherwise, it can be child's play for a kid to order toys and other goodies through Alexa.

As for those screen models, many also have cam-

eras for video chats. When you're not using the device, consider turning it around to face the wall, especially in the bedroom and other private settings. Or stick a bandage or some tape over the camera. It shouldn't be recording, but why tempt fate?

SECURITY WITH SECURITY VIDEO

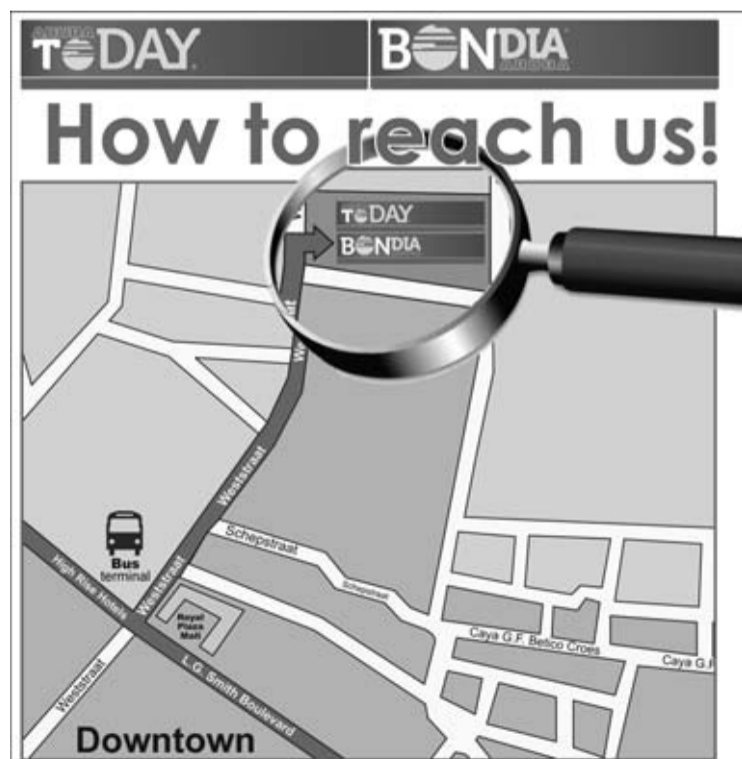
Online security cameras let you check in on your pets or kids when you're not home.

Amazon's Ring doorbell lets you check who's at the door without getting up. Here's the rub: If you can view video on an app, it's possible that a skilled hacker can, too.

When you use the same password at multiple services, a hacker stealing your password from one place can try it on the camera service, too.

So don't reuse password. When available, enable two-factor authentication, which requires you to enter a temporary code sent as a text to ensure it's you.

Again, you might want to turn the camera to face the wall when you're home. It's a pain, though, and if you forget to turn it back when you leave, it defeats the purpose of having a security camera.



US stock indexes move higher on first trading day of 2020

By ALEX VEIGA
Associated Press

Stocks moved higher on Wall Street in midday trading Thursday as U.S. markets reopened following the New Year's Day holiday.

The gains followed a rally in overseas markets after China's central bank said it will free up more money for lending. Investors have been encouraged in recent weeks as the U.S. and China have taken steps to resolve some of their differences in their long-running trade dispute. Washington and Beijing announced last month that they reached an agreement over a "Phase 1" trade deal that calls for the U.S. to reduce tariffs and China to buy larger quantities of U.S. farm products. Earlier this week, President Donald Trump tweeted that he will sign the initial trade deal with China at the White House next month. He also said he



A trader works at the New York Stock Exchange, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

plans to travel to Beijing at a later date to open talks on other sticking points in the dispute that remain to be worked out, including Chinese practices the U.S. complains unfairly favor its own companies.

Technology companies accounted for a big slice of the market's upward move Thursday. Western Digital climbed 2.6% and Advanced Micro Devices

rose 3.8%.

Financial and industrial stocks also notched solid gains. American Express added 1.3% and General Electric rose 3%.

Supermarket operators and household goods makers were among the biggest decliners. Kroger fell 1.8% and Kellogg lost 1.7%.

Health care and utilities stocks also fell broadly. Perrigo dropped 2.4% and

FirstEnergy slid 2.1%.

KEEPING SCORE: The S&P 500 was up 0.2% as of 11:42 a.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 152 points, or 0.5%, to 28,690. The Nasdaq composite gained 0.5%.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL: Anixter International climbed 3.3% after the supplier of communication and security products agreed to a higher buyout offer from private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier and Rice.

EXECUTIVE EXITS: Shares in Wingstop slumped 4.7% after the operator of chicken wing restaurants said its chief operating officer, Lawrence Krugler, will resign as of March 7.

BOND YIELDS: Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 1.87% from 1.91% late Tuesday.

ENERGY: Oil prices headed lower, reversing early gains. Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell 25 cents to \$60.81 a

barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, was down 19 cents to \$65.81 per barrel.

CHINA BANKING: China's central bank said it will cut the amount of money banks will be required to have on hand from Jan. 6. The move is expected to boost the country's slowing economy ahead of the Lunar New Year, which falls on Jan. 25. Companies and individuals typically need large amounts of cash on hand during China's most important annual holiday to pay bonuses, clear debts and cover other expenses.

MARKETS OVERSEAS: Major indexes in Europe rose. Germany's DAX was 1.1% higher, while France's CAC 40 rose 1.2%. Britain's FTSE 100 added 1%. In Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.1% and South Korea's Kospi lost 1.0%. Tokyo's market was closed for the New Year's Day holiday. □

Isabel dos Santos slams Angolan court for seizing \$1 billion

By ANDREW MELDRUM
Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Isabel dos Santos, who is often described as Africa's richest woman, has denounced as "politically motivated" an Angolan court order to seize an estimated \$1 billion worth of her assets. Dos Santos, the 46-year-old daughter of former Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, has a fortune estimated at \$2.2 billion by Forbes magazine.

An Angolan court on Dec. 23 ordered her bank accounts frozen and her shares in local companies seized, including ones from the Unitel telecommunications firm, the BFA bank

and the cement company Cimangola, according to Angola's state news agency. The move is seen as part of President Joao Lourenco's anti-corruption drive. Eduardo dos Santos's 38-year rule as president was marked by widespread corruption in which billions of dollars of state funds went missing, according to investigations by international financial institutions. In a statement Wednesday on Twitter, Dos Santos condemned the seizures as a "politically motivated attack" against her. She claimed the trial was held in "total secrecy" and she was not able to "answer the trumped-up charges ...

which were based on fabricated documents."

Dos Santos vowed to "use all the instruments of Angolan and international law at my disposal to fight this order and ensure the truth comes out."

She heads a vast business empire, controlling companies in Angola and Portugal. Fluent in Portuguese and English, dos Santos describes herself on Twitter as an "engineer, entrepreneur, investor, public fig-

ure." She says she succeeded in amassing such wealth because of her education and her business acumen, not because of her father's connections.

She now lives outside of Angola because she says she faces death threats at home.

Angola has sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest economy as a result of its oil and diamonds. But Angola's wealth has failed to bring economic development

and the country's education and health standards for its 32 million people are abysmally low, according to the U.N.

In 2016, toward the end of his rule, Eduardo dos Santos appointed his daughter as the head of Angola's state-owned oil firm, Sonangol, and it seemed that the dos Santos family would continue to benefit from the country's wealth. □




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 studio wk 1 \$7,5 K
 building 4 28 weeks 8 acclerated
 studio wk 7 and 8 \$8,5 K each
 birdie 4 with 27 and 29 weeks

Divi Village
 5th Floor building C
 25 weeks remain
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In this photo provided by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, department wildlife biologist Mercedes Bartkovich holds a golden eagle dubbed Keeton, after he was tagged with a cellular data transmitter at the Oakmulgee Wildlife Management Area on Jan. 24, 2019. **Associated Press**

By **JANET McCONNAUGHEY**
Associated Press

Golden eagles are back from Canada, spending the winter in the eastern U.S.

Researcher Trish Miller said there are probably around 5,000 east of the Mississippi River, compared to estimates of 1,000 to 2,500 when she and her husband, Michael Lanzone, began studying them in 2005. Other scientists have come up with similar figures. Golden eagles are among North America's largest birds of prey, some with wingspans broader than 7 feet (2.1 meters). They're mostly brown, but are named for the golden feathers at the back of the head and neck. An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 live worldwide, including Europe, Asia and North

Africa. In North America they're far more numerous in the West, where an estimated 40,000 live or winter, but some can be found for at least part of the year in most of Canada and the United States, and parts of Mexico. Miller, of Conservation Science Global in West Cape May, New Jersey, said the greatest numbers wintering in the eastern U.S. are probably along the Virginia-West Virginia state line, though she and Lanzone, of Cellular Tracking Technologies in Rio Grande, New Jersey, haven't analyzed likely densities.

Hundreds of camera traps, with bait set in front of motion-sensitive game cameras, have documented them in every state east of the Mississippi River and cellular tracking tags have

About 5,000 golden eagles winter in eastern U.S.

shown them venturing into others, she said.

"A couple of the birds we've tagged in Alabama have gone to Mississippi and Louisiana. We have one bird we caught in Georgia that is right now in Missouri, in the Ozarks," she said Tuesday. "He's been spending several weeks there now. I don't know if he'll end up spending more time there or go down to Georgia."

Tennessee and Alabama are the focus of a habitat study she and Lanzone hope to complete by the end of 2020, she said.

Unlike bald eagles, golden eagles prefer remote forests and mountains. Miller said she and Lanzone rarely see the birds unless they're in a blind at a repeatedly visited camera trap. The scientists set up a box-shaped net launcher near the bait to catch birds for tagging while they wait in the blind where they hid before dawn.

Four tagged birds have returned to Alabama, and a fifth is on its way, Mercedes Bartkovich, in charge of Alabama's golden eagle research, said Tuesday.

There are certainly more golden eagles, but their elusiveness makes it hard to estimate how many winter in Alabama, said Bartkovich, a nongame wildlife

biologist for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The first to return to Alabama this year was a female dubbed Coosa, at the Talladega National Forest. Keeton is at the Oakmulgee Wildlife Management Area and Trace at the Freedom Hills WMA. A female dubbed Natchez was in Illinois at the start of the week and a male named Coon Dog had just made his way from Tennessee into Alabama, Bartkovich said.

Alabama's tagging so far has been in the north, but this January's tagging trip will focus on the southern part of the state, Miller said. The birds always return to the areas where they were tagged, Bartkovich said, and each follows a nearly identical migration route each year, sometimes with one path to and another from its breeding ground in Canada.

Coon Dog has flown farthest, often to the tips of Quebec and Newfoundland, Bartkovich said. Natchez and Trace went up around the eastern side of Hudson Bay and Keeton on the bay's western side.

Coosa "kind of went all over," Bartkovich said. "I can tell you where he went but not positively exactly where his breeding loca-

tion was."

She said Coosa's most northern flight took him just east of a town called Labrador City, near the Labrador-Quebec line and about 480 miles (770 kilometers) east of James Bay, which projects southeast from Hudson Bay.

Coosa, Trace and Keeton all were tagged last January, Natchez and Coon Dog were both tagged at Freedom Hills, Natchez in 2015 and Coon Dog in 2016.

The birds don't have to be sedated — putting a hood over a bird's head calms it down, she said.

Golden eagles look a bit like juvenile bald eagles, but golden eagles' legs are feathered to their toes, unlike bald eagles' yellow legs. Golden eagles eat mammals such as rabbits, hares, ground squirrels and prairie dogs — and they do their own hunting, while bald eagles often steal fish from smaller raptors such as osprey. OutdoorAlabama.com has maps showing some golden eagles paths but is no longer getting data for most of those birds. "Sometimes we got multiple years of data from some of the birds, sometimes we just got a season," Bartkovich said. "It's sort of out of our hands once we get the transmitter on." □



This photo, taken on Jan. 11, 2017, by an Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources game camera, shows two golden eagles at a deer carcass at Freedom Hills Wildlife Management Area in Alabama.

Associated Press

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Golden Globes will serve plant-based meal at awards ceremony

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Golden Globes, known as the "party of the year," is going with a meatless menu for its 77th annual awards show.

Guests will be served a 100% plant-based meal just ahead of showtime Sunday. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association said Thursday that it wants the initiative to raise environmental awareness about food consumption and waste.

"If there's a way we can, not change the world, but save the planet, maybe we can get the Golden Globes to send a signal and draw attention to the issue about climate change," HFPA president Lorenzo Soria said. "The food we eat, the way we grow the food we eat, the way we dispose of the food is one of the large contributors to the climate crisis." The annual awards ceremony will air on NBC



This image released by the Golden Globe Awards shows a dish of king oyster mushroom scallops on a bed of wild mushroom risotto with roasted Brussels sprouts, prepared by Beverly Hilton Executive Chef Matthew Morgan.

from The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California. Soria said there was some initial push back about changing the menu just about two weeks before

the show, but the hotel eventually agreed on the new menu.

"People were basically saying it's too late, we're ready with all the orders, the

holidays and all that," he said. "But after we began discussions, meeting for one or two days, (the hotel) accepted the change completely. They started

to experiment with how to do plant-based meals that was not just their symbolic steps, but also something that guests will enjoy."

Matthew Morgan, executive chef at The Beverly Hilton, called the menu change initially surprising. But he ultimately understood it would send a positive message.

"It was a little shocking when first mentioned, because of being very close to the actual Globes and having already decided on a menu," he said. "But once we thought about it and the message that it sent, we were really excited about it. That's something I stand behind myself."

Items on the main entree include king oyster mushrooms scallops and wild mushroom risotto, along with roasted baby purple and green Brussels sprouts and carrots. A chilled golden beet soup will be served as an appetizer. □

Associated Press

In 2019, the box office belonged to Disney

By **JAKE COYLE**

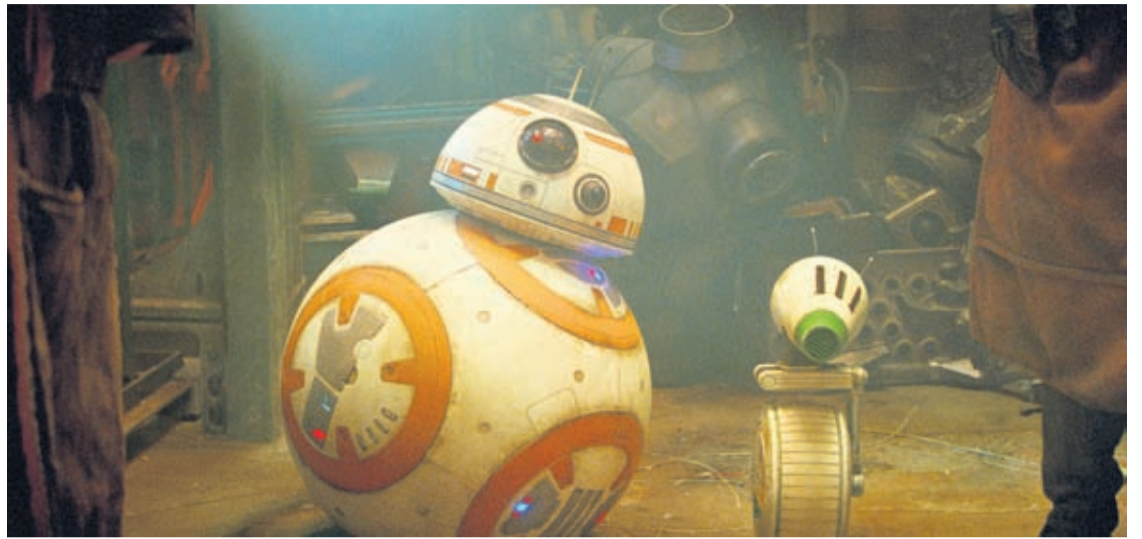
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Every movie year offers up a parade of hits and flops. But in 2019, no winner was in the same galaxy as the Walt Disney Co. And the biggest loser might have been anyone less thrilled about the box-office domination of franchise films.

When the year closes out Tuesday, the top 10 films in U.S. and Canada theaters

will all be intellectual property-backed movies. That, in itself, isn't new. It's the third year in a row that the year's 10 biggest ticket-sellers have all been sequels, remakes and superhero films.

But in today's IP-driven movie world, one studio is in a league of its own. In 2019, Disney dominated American moviegoing more than any studio ever has before — roughly 38%



This image released by Lucasfilm shows droids BB-8, left, and D-O in a scene from "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker."

Associated Press

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of all domestic moviegoing.

The year's top five films were all Disney movies, and it played a hand in the sixth. Disney's Marvel Studios produced the Sony Pictures release "Spider-Man: Far From Home."

Disney banked about \$13 billion in worldwide box office in 2019, including a record number of \$1 billion releases. Once "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" (\$724.8 million through Sunday) inevitably reaches that milestone, it will mark the studio's seventh such \$1 billion movie in 2019. The others were: "Avengers: Endgame" (the highest grossing release ever, not accounting for inflation, with \$2.8 billion), "The Lion King," "Captain Marvel," "Aladdin," "Toy Story 4" and "Frozen II."

Disney's unprecedented market share includes films from 20th Century Fox, the 84-year-old studio that Disney gobbled up in March in a \$71.3 billion acquisition. Despite Disney's considerable firepower, overall ticket sales in U.S. and Canada theaters were down 4.4% from the year before through Sunday, according to data firm Comscore. The upper echelons of the box office may be stratospheric, but the lower realms — where critics' scores are rotten and word of mouth is faster than opening weekend — are dismal. The movies are increasingly a zero-sum game. You're either "The Lion King" or you're "Cats."

"There's plenty of capacity to bring people to the movie screen," says Cathleen Taff, distribution chief for Disney. "What I think we're doing is competing for their time. If it's not great, they do have other options. But when it is great, people show up. And we've seen that this year with seven \$1 billion movies."

Disney's considerable role in today's moviegoing hasn't been without critics. They have lamented its megablockbusters as products, not cinema. Before Martin Scorsese's criticisms of Disney's Marvel movies sparked headlines, he lamented the monopolizing of the multiplex, disturbed by the sight of "Avengers: Endgame" playing on 11 of a theater's 12 screens.

If the big-screen experience is narrowing, the small screen is expanding. Streaming services proliferated in 2019 with the launch of Apple TV Plus (although it pushed back its first big movie release) and Disney Plus. Amazon also reshaped its release strategy, shortening the theatrical window for some of its movies to just two weeks. Netflix rolled out its most ambitious release slate, including a host of awards contenders, led by Scorsese's "The Irishman" and Noah Baumbach's "Marriage Story," that played in only limited theaters. The so-called streaming wars will only grow in 2020 when NBCUniversal launches its service, Peacock, and WarnerMedia debuts HBO

Max. While some may see a downturn in ticket sales as indicative of streaming's impact, John Fithian, the president and chief executive of the National Association of Theater Owners, believes streaming is disruptive to broadcast TV, cable and home markets like DVDs, but not to movie theaters.

"This may sound counter-intuitive, but with the launch of Disney-Plus, HBO Max and Peacock, we're more confident of the symbiotic relationship of streaming and theatrical than we were before," says Fithian. "The people who stream also go to the movies a lot." Disney, Universal and Warner Bros. also remain devoted to the traditional theatrical window. Netflix will soon be competing with studios that can offer both a robust theatrical release and a streaming life — albeit not one with the same number of viewers at home that Netflix can promise. Those services have certainly added pressure to the theatrical release, and quite a few in 2019 weren't up to the challenge. The year's most glaring bombs included bold bids at technological innovation ("Gemini Man"), mishandled franchise finales ("Dark Phoenix"), remakes that failed to connect ("Charlie's Angels"), prestige dramas doomed by controversy ("Richard Jewell"), toy movies that didn't click ("Playmobil: The Movie") and, you know, "Cats." □

Kisses, cheers, fireworks welcome 2020 in Times Square

By REBECCA GIBIAN

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Couples kissed. Others cheered and waved balloons as fireworks burst into the night sky and confetti fell to welcome the start of 2020 in New York City's Times Square.

In one of the globe's most-watched New Year's Eve spectacles, the crowd counted down the last seconds of 2019 as a luminescent crystal ball descended down a pole. Throngs of people cheered and sang along to the X Ambassadors' soul-stirring rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" just before midnight.

About 3,000 pounds (1,360 kilograms) of confetti showered the sea of attendees, many of whom were also briefly rained on earlier in the evening as they waited in security pens for performances by stars including rap-pop star Post Malone, K-pop group BTS, country singer Sam Hunt and singer-songwriter Alanis Morissette.

The frenzied moment of celebration came after many hours of waiting for much of the crowd.

Eric and Aileen Sanchez-Himes brought their son and nephew from Framingham, Massachusetts, to experience what they consider a "bucket list item." Eric packed granola bars and water in his coat in case they got hungry. They arrived at 10:30 a.m.

"I grew up in New York, in



People celebrate the New Year in Times Square in New York, early Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020.

Associated Press

Brooklyn and the Bronx and I've never done this and this was the first time for us and what better year than 2020 to do this," Aileen said.

Mathieu Plesotsky, 25, visiting from Hesse, Germany, said he wanted to be a part of the spectacle after watching it for years on TV. He arrived in Times Square at 1 p.m. with his girlfriend and bopped along to the performers while waiting for the ball to drop.

"We've just stayed, stand, tried not to pee, danced to the Village People," he said.

Ever since the NYPD tightened security and began cracking down on public drinking years ago, Times Square on New Year's Eve has been an endurance

contest as much as a raucous celebration.

Many people arrive before noon to get a spot close to the action. Alcohol is banned.

Spectators enter through a security screening gauntlet to enter pens they cannot leave, including to use the bathroom, if they hope to return.

The weather can be brutal. When revelers rang in 2018, it was only 10 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 12 Celsius). For the dawn of 2019, rain poured throughout the evening, leaving puddles on the performance stages.

The weather seemed perfect Tuesday, until it wasn't. Rain, which wasn't in the forecast, briefly drenched

the crowd just before 8:30 p.m.

Still, the celebration was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many.

"It was a dream, I wanted to do it so this year a lot of people helped me to get here so I'm here, and I'm thankful for that," said Mariemma Mejias, 48, who flew to New York for the festivities from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Amanda Camacho, 25, from Heredia, Costa Rica, said she and her mother spent their evening in the security pens "talking to people and meeting people and sharing," Camacho said.

"We met people from Korea, we met people from Guatemala that were ac-

tually here just for New Year's Eve, so it has been pretty cool," she said.

While giddiness was expected to prevail at the televised event, some important global issues will be driven home, as well.

The Associated Press presented a news reel highlighting the most memorable events of 2019.

High school science teachers and students, spotlighting efforts to combat climate change, were to help press the button that begins the famous 60-second ball drop and countdown to 2020, followed by 3,000 pounds (1,360 kilograms) of confetti.

Thousands of police officers were on hand for the festivities, plus more than 1,000 security cameras, helicopters and drones equipped with thermal-imaging and 3D-mapping capabilities and super-zoom lenses.

Christina Genovese and Jessica Vanich, friends from Buffalo, New York, said the security line was about 30 minutes long when they arrived at 10:30 a.m.

"It's not as cold as Buffalo so we're OK," Genovese said.

Aubrey Fannin, who traveled from Kirkland, Washington, with her friend Kennedy Bryne, is optimistic for 2020.

"This is our year," Fannin said moments after the clock struck midnight. "This is the world's year. Let's do it." □

Bobbi Kristina Brown's ex-partner Nick Gordon dies at 30

Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Nick Gordon, who was found liable in the death of his ex-partner Bobbi Kristina Brown, has died. He was 30.

Gordon's attorney Joe S. Habachy confirmed his client's death in a statement Wednesday to The Associated Press. The Atlanta attorney did not give a cause of death or say where it occurred.

Gordon's death comes nearly five years after

Brown, the daughter of singers Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown, was found face-down and unresponsive in a bathtub in January 2015. The 22-year-old died after six months in a coma.

Investigators with the medical examiner's office were not able to determine exactly how Bobbi Kristina Brown died.

An autopsy showed that she had morphine, cocaine, alcohol and pre-

scription drugs in her body, but the medical examiner couldn't determine if she killed herself, if someone else killed her or if her death was accidental.

Gordon was never charged in the case, but he was found responsible in a wrongful death lawsuit.

An Atlanta judge ordered him to pay \$36 million to Brown's estate.

Houston brought Gordon into her household as an



In this Oct. 22, 2012, file photo, Bobbi Kristina Brown and Nick Gordon attend the premiere party for "The Houstons On Our Own" at the Tribeca Grand hotel in New York.

Associated Press

orphan at the age of 12, raising him and her daughter

after divorcing Bobby Brown in 2007. □

In a 24/7 food culture, periodic fasting gains followers

By **CANDICE CHOI**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — On low-carb diets, meat and cheese are OK.

On low-fat diets, fruit and oatmeal are fine.

With the latest diet trend, no foods at all are allowed for long stretches of time.

A diet that forbids eating for hours on end might seem doomed in a culture where food is constantly available, but apps and Facebook groups are popping up for people practicing "intermittent fasting."

Bri Wyatt, a 32-year-old Tennessee resident, tried it this summer.

"At first I was like, there's no way," she said.

But after reading more about it, she thought it might not be that hard. She started by skipping breakfast and night-time snacks, and later moved on to a 60-day challenge of fasting every other day.

Melissa Breaux Bankston, a Crossfit instructor in New Orleans, Louisiana, also tried intermittent fasting as a way to curb her snacking. "I wanted to limit the amount of time that I was eating," she said.

Studies on the potential health benefits of intermittent fasting are still limited, including for its effectiveness with weight loss. But heading into the new year, you may be wondering whether it could help you get in better shape.

WHEN, NOT WHAT

Like other diets, intermittent fasting helps you lose weight by setting boundaries around food. But instead of limiting what you eat, it restricts when you eat.

"It's really another way of fooling your body into eating less calories," said Krista Varady, who studies intermittent fasting at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Proponents say intermittent fasting helps with weight loss in other ways.

For instance, they say it forces your body to start burning its own fat for fuel after depleting the energy it normally gets from food.

But any effects would depend on the specific approach you take, and



Melissa Breaux Bankston, a CrossFit athletic trainer at CrossFit Algiers in New Orleans, works out at the gym Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

Varady said there isn't strong evidence yet that intermittent fasting has any unique effects compared with other diets.

Regardless, people should consult their doctor before trying it. It's not advised for children, people on certain medications and people with a history of eating disorders.

FASTING MENU

One of the more popular approaches to intermittent fasting is to limit eating to an 8-hour window and to fast during the day's other 16 hours. This is called time-

restricted feeding and isn't as difficult as some other approaches, since the fasting period can include the time you're asleep.

Many people tailor the eating window to be shorter or longer.

Some eat just one meal a day, while others fast entire days a couple times a week. On fasting days, people may allow themselves around 600 calories if needed.

But Dr. Jason Fung, who has written books on intermittent fasting, says skipping food altogether might ac-

tually be easier, since eating small amounts could stimulate appetite.

Whatever the method, people aren't supposed to gorge when they stop fasting. Fung says it's a myth that fasting leaves you famished.

Sumaya Kazi, who posts about her intermittent fasting online and offers coaching services on the diet, says it seems more difficult than it is partly because overeating has become the norm. "Intermittent fasting is more of a mental challenge than a

physical challenge," she says. But people react differently to diets, and fasting may be a lot harder for some than for others, says Dr. Fatima Stanford, a Harvard Medical School obesity specialist.

"There's no one size fits all," she said.

FASTING ON TRIAL

Obesity experts have become interested in intermittent fasting, but studies on the diet are still emerging. For now, limited research suggests it may not be any better for weight loss than conventional calorie-cutting over the long term.

"Unfortunately, intermittent fasting gets a little hyped," said Courtney Peterson, who studies the diet at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Still, some fasting approaches may be more effective than others. And Peterson notes the difficulty of designing studies that definitively capture a diet's effects. That's in part because so many other variables could be at play.

For instance, researchers are looking at whether any benefits of intermittent fasting might be tied to when the eating period falls and fluctuations in how well our bodies process food throughout the day.

Some health experts say intermittent fasting might be too difficult for many people.

They point to a study of 100 people where those placed in the alternate-day fasting group lost around the same amount of weight as those on conventional calorie-restriction diets over time. But the fasting group had a dropout rate of 38%, compared with 29% for the conventional diet group.

But intermittent fasting may be easier than other diets for people who already skip meals when they're too busy, said Varady of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

To make weight loss stick, she said people should pick diets that resemble how they already eat.

"Different diets do work for different people," she said. □



This combination of 2015 and 2019 photos provided by Sumaya Kazi shows her before and after her intermittent fasting regimen.

Associated Press